

WOMEN CAN'T PLAY DOMINOS: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC STUDY OF WORKING CLASS
LIFE IN A MIDLANDS PUB.

BY

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Abstract

This is a study of class and gender in everyday life on a housing estate in the Midlands. Based on extensive ethnographic research in a pub on the estate, it looks at how identities are constructed in the negotiation of work, relationships, children, and local 'officials'. It considers how social and cultural capital is formed against the odds and against a widespread pathologising of those struggling to get by. It presents a detailed and contextual understanding of (white) working class identities in the context of neo-liberalism. In doing so, it questions standard sociological accounts of class as well as the official discourse of public policy which represents disadvantage in terms of 'responsibility' and 'aspirations', while ignoring structural disadvantage.

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Chapter One: Contextualising class

Introduction

Bottero in '*Class Identities and the Identity of Class*' (2004) opens her discussion with the question 'What does "class" mean?' (2004: 985). Initially this may seem a basic question, theoretically answered according to your epistemological position, but also for me answered in terms of my identity; I am a white working class woman. Here though lies the complexity of the question that Bottero is addressing as for someone like me; from my background and generation class has meaning in terms of my identity, growing up in the 1970's 80's in a heavy manufacturing area, but also class is a sociological concept.

In the discussion of class, our response as sociologists is dictated by a problem of our own sociological creation: the defining of class. The developing of class theories, and the methodologies of exploring class (as well as the epistemological; or some may argue political/policy issues standpoint of the working class as a phenomenon) have created the object of enquiry; has created the 'other' that is class. This is evident in discussions concerning the relevance, future and nature of class in the classic works through the 50's, 60's and 70's, most notably Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1968) as they sought to extend class theories beyond what had gone before. However, class is still largely presented as a sociologist's identification of common position within a stratification order (objective class position) with attitudes that might follow from it (subjective class position), but need not. A two group approach in the continuation of theorising of class moves us from defining; or imposing, demarcates of class through objective ordering (first group), to beginning to define class as groups as sets cultural self- identifiers (second group) Bottero stating that the second group 'has arisen in response to the perceived deficiencies of the first' (p.385) framing how sociologists have debated and taken positions over the relevance and place of class theory in contemporary sociology.

But discussions of ordering of class polarises homogenous groups within the stratification order, and, as Bottero continues discussing qualitative approaches to class research, participants are often resistant to identifying with class position:

When confronted with questions about class issues, the respondents in such studies are often concerned to establish their own 'ordinariness' ...Savage suggests that such responses are 'an indirect way of "refusing" class identity, and hence might be an indirect way of repudiating the entire "class" discourse altogether' (Savage, 2000: 35). (2004:987).

I am aware that in arguing in terms of how people define themselves, reflected in my experience and in discussions in the pub is a call to 'ordinariness', that this is 'ordinariness' under discussion has real cultural meaning, it means I'm like you. I am ordinary in that I don't think of myself as being better and most importantly I'm not like 'them', the 'them' that are posh and privileged but also; as will become more pertinent in this work, I am not like the 'them' with their dirty net curtains and neglected kids, the chavs and despised class. My work shows that in defining yourself as ordinary, being 'one of us' is the recognition of the experience of class, the inequalities as well as the as well as the distinction as not one of them. Further if in defining a homogeneous working class there is a need to evidence a class consciousness then discussion of the inequalities that form our lives is the way to access such narratives. As I will show, one of us, what we do, dirty hands, getting on with it, your house and your kids, these are the class narratives, the pervading class consciousness just as they were over the decades that sociological theorists have been theorising class.

I am of a mind that these discussions on class bear little relevance to the lives of the people in the pub, the keenness to identify yourself as ordinary that Savage presents as a rejection of class identity and discourse for me highlights a need for a greater examination and understanding of what working class 'means' in terms of how we live and experience being working class alongside more traditional forms of theorising class. The impact that sociological theory has on policy and generally the

representation and perception of the working class in society cannot be ignored. I realise though the need to engage with some of the discussions around the contentious issues that exist between class as theorised and class as experience.

My work does not take a structural approach, as framing work, education, and financial situation of the individuals would represent the crude way we continue to measure class place them as working class, suffice to say that inequalities are evident in all aspects of people's lives in the pub and on the estate. I have identified that in terms of work, education levels, health and benefit claims the area of my study is clearly an area classically defined as in poverty. The type of work for the majority of people in the area empirically places us as working class (CeLSIUS), but what does that mean, especially for the people in the pub?

As I will argue, though people may not openly discuss class; why would they the friendships and networks are built around commonality of experience and available skills and resources, class is something that is done to us and done by us. Pragmatic acceptance of the classed nature of our lives can be summarised in the following:

People do not have to explicitly recognize class issues, or identify with discrete class groupings, for class processes to operate. All that is required is for specific cultural practices to be bound up with the reproduction of hierarchy. The emphasis is not on the development (or not) of class consciousness, but rather on the classed nature of particular social and cultural practices. (Bottero, 2004:989).

Class operates in the lives of people in the pub, we certainly experience being working class, this is reflected in discussions in the following chapters regarding their relationship to, and dealings with, social institutions such as education, the benefits agency and the medical profession ¹

Class is not just about material conditions, but experience and culture, informed by certain ideologies. To expand, Louis Althusser's work defines the relation between

¹ This is very clearly discussed between older and younger women when discussing not only which doctors are worth seeing, but more especially their dealings with health visitors or 'hells visitors' as they call them.

ideology and economic conditions, through linking materiality with ideology. He inverts the argument that ideologies are formed by consciousness, but rather consciousness is constructed by ideologies which are tied to real structures. Althusser argues that ideologies are 'imaginary relations of individuals to their conditions of existence' (Althusser in Finch, 1993:4). As Finch argues drawing from Althusser:

there are 'real' material conditions, 'real' relations to those material conditions, and 'imaginary' relations to material conditions. 'Imaginary' relations are the ones which have effect for, through ideology, people actually relate to 'the real' through 'the imaginary'. In many cases their 'imaginary' relation to 'the real' may differ from their 'real' relations to 'the real'. This is false consciousness. So there is, in this theoretical formulation, economic order-real classes which are formed through relations to that order- and there are both real and imaginary (sometimes false) ways in which the classes relate to the reality of that economic order. (1993: 5)

I have quoted Finch at length here as the distinction between the 'imaginary' and 'the real' is defined well here, of how these relations are discursively created and maintained. But, as I will discuss, the 'ways in which the classes relate to the reality of that economic order' has shaped a different form of social, cultural and emotional capital. To expand, following Finch's lead, this is the study of an *idea of a group*. The group exists, they are there still, but the relational here is based on ideas and ideologies which have formed through experience, experience which does not match the dominant models of cultural and social capital. The 'imaginary relation to the real' is informed from a different standpoint than has been imposed from outside in the form of theorising's of class, and imaginary relations to the real' A specific moral economy (see Thompson. 1971) and forms of pragmatic acceptance (practical consideration of what is achievable or desirable in given circumstances) - are adopted within working class ideologies.

A point I will expand on later in chapter four, is the extent to which the gender and class performance that formed this study were tied to a particular moments of social

and political development and ideologies of class consciousness. To what extent are these class and gender performances linked to past epistemologies of working class lives; of people in an earlier industrial society where hyper-masculinity is promoted to justify the ability of a group to endure harsh working conditions, but women become invisible as workers tied to a pseudo ideal of women as contained within the realm of the domestic? In short, from the time that the middle class scholarly or proselytising gaze fell on the working class, especially on women in manufacturing areas, has this group been avoiding the classifications imposed on them? Not so much resistance as dismissal as not 'real.' This adds the dimension that the 'real' is interpretable, not static and so classifications are interpretable.

I need to be careful here as I am not saying that people can or do just ignore class or gender restrictions that have no resonance to them in direct experience as this is patently not true or achievable. It is precisely that it is through the doxa of class and gender classifications that people's experiences meet a clash of the imaginary and reality. As the imaginary is not achievable, reality is created through experience. The dominant discursive construction of class and gender have little or no resonance, although 'known', so other discourses are used within the group:

All that is important is how 'the real': is interpreted and understood and how the social and the political order is constructed in relation to that interpretation? Discourse is precisely this-the ways of understanding, interpreting, making sense of and reacting to a 'real', which is impossible to know. (Finch, 1993:5)

The emergence of a definable working class is the emergence of a set of epistemological and social determinants as much as the economic stimulus that provided them. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, reformers began an ongoing campaign to 'act upon' the working classes, but this was a working class that had been discursively created, and continued to be, as a problem.

The nineteenth century environmentalist social surveyors acted within a historically specific perception of the world, in order to decide what was relevant and meaningful among all the potential information there was to be observed about this as yet un-constituted grouping. The borders of the

grouping were located through adherence to a notion of class- that is, they agreed that some sections of the population were not the same as others, and what made them different was they were in different classes. (Finch, 1993:8)

The literal classification of a group as defined as different to others remains an issue today, It would seem here that Finch is stating the emergence of the working class is a product of the late nineteenth century desire to classify the world around them, that 'working class' is as much a bi-product of the epistemological change at this time as the difference between beetles and bears.

It is evident that being recognised, or identifying with, or as something, has been a political move to identity or recognition politics. But these politics are framed within a discourse of bourgeois individualism that favours a discourse of difference over a discourse of inequality. But these discourses are framed within particular epistemologies, to recognise difference is to recognise the historical and cultural path that has developed theories and ideologies of difference:

To be recognised is also dependent on the symbolic systems of knowledge and evaluation to which we have access and through which we recognize others. These symbolic systems have real effects on movements in social space. (Skeggs,2001:87)

In effect, I am arguing that class is a 'social relation' of hierarchies rather than just an economic relation, discursively produced as much as materially produced. Of course, there are material conditions, but, in terms of how 'class' is 'lived', it is the interactional order that constitutes its reality. You need to be able to read the cultural symbols of class in order to begin to understand what is happening, what is being said, living class means being immersed in the imposed symbolic value of class to put this simplistically in the case of state agencies the working class are 'too much', not good enough and in terms of neo-liberal approaches 'resistant to change', ignoring that within the class these are important symbols dirty hands, good mom, clean home and kids, symbols, if you cannot interpret them; if you have no

access to the code then you have a limited understanding of the phenomena in play before you. To exemplify this I give the example of understanding 'elephant'.

As an undergraduate I was sat watching a wildlife programme with a fellow student who came from Namibia. The scene was a bull elephant leading an elephant herd to water. My friend turned to me and told me 'That's an elephant' to which I replied 'I know'. He said again 'that's an elephant', and again I said 'I know' feeling more than slightly spoken down to; I know what an elephant looks like I've seen pictures, programmes, read the call for financial support for Elephant survival, I've been to the zoo! He then said 'No, that's an elephant' and then I got what he meant. My friend meant that I have a partial understanding of elephant; I recognise the concept of an elephant, I can study elephant statistics, join in conversations about the ivory trade and the sad loss of elephants, I can even give you a rousing version of *Nelly the Elephant*, but that's where my knowledge and experience of 'elephant' ends. In telling me 'that's an elephant' he went on to tell me about their movement; the way the Bull was holding his head, who was who in the elephant train, look at where the cows and the calves are and that they were in a playful mood. He could see elephant in a way I had no knowledge or experience of, and I could not see anything other than my own experience of elephant. So, to me, as the ethnographer immersed in and writing about working classness, I can walk into a corner shop and give a good account of the socio-economic make-up of an area by the beer, cigarettes and sweets on sale, I know the codes of clothes, hairstyles, handbags and shopping bags; I can tell pubs to avoid and good pubs to be in from one look. This knowledge and these lived experiences, these are my elephants. To give this substance: 'One cannot really *Live* [authors emphasis] the belief associated with profoundly different conditions of existence... still less give others the means of reliving it by the sheer power of discourse. (Bourdieu 1990: 68) And: 'What is most essential to a people's experience may be sedimented in the background practices they take for granted in referring and may be inscribed in their comportment and motility, the way they have, unconsciously learned to be in a world'. (Cannadine, 1996:64). Class may not directly be in the discussions in the pub, but it is there in how we live, talk, dress,

make relationships, raise our children it's there in how we experience and 'deal with' life class is ingrained in us.

Class will out don't matter what you do' (Pete)

Class is not dead for this group. Class is not dead, as is argued by many amongst them Pakulski and Waters (1996) asserting 'classes are dissolving and ...the most advanced societies are no longer class societies' (1996:4). The argument that class societies were the product of nineteenth century economic and production relations, and the middle twentieth century saw the disassembling of class system to become societies dominated by 'post-traditional' individuals, has a ring of rational objectivity. Such theories point to the present which reflects stratification through socially mobile global self-regarding individuals, even to the extent that they argue this current progression will see the death of gender as well as class (Pakulski and Waters. 1996. 112). But the class for which Pakulski and Waters are writing a theoretical obituary for is a particular theoretical approach to class that only a few class theorists would now adhere to. Though recognising class as a variable in their work Pakulski and Waters do restrict their definition of class as access to economic, social and cultural resources' (Ibid) This is a limited approach to a traditional take on class, arguing that a structuralist approach limits the agency of the individuals. However, taking the cultural turn approach to class, emphasising the self-defining individual it seems to miss the point that we may define ourselves in ways other than those expected by the social science academy. Crucially the economic, social and cultural realities of working class experience are still there, they just look different in response to the social and economic changes that have taken place.

Standing in the pub day after day, as said people do not talk about class in a way that would make my sociological research easier. They make no direct references to the Registrar General's class schema, they do not directly discuss the means of production, alienation or false consciousness. It would be easy to assume that class is not an issue and that class is a redundant concept for people here; that class is, as has been argued, dead. But class and notions about class are there, identified by the

men by the position of pride to be working, to be part of those who work, to be providing, to have dirty hands, a point to be discussed further in chapter five, and for the women in providing for the survival and success of themselves and their families in often changing circumstances.

They do talk of inequality, discuss ideas of injustice in the sense of their children being excluded from schools (boys) or being let down by schools about achievement (girls). People do discuss anger, a feeling left out of a system that benefits 'those who already have' - the bankers and managers - they do discuss inequality of provision in health care, in benefits, and in housing. The discussions are based on a sense of moral social justice of moral economy that is excluding people from what is considered to be rightly theirs, which is available to those with money. It is my argument that we need to understand working classness not only as identified through occupational or structural theories, but working class as an identity, as experience that has traversed the move from industrial to post-industrial society, modernity to post-modernity. In order to understand this we need to understand that existing theories as applied to class lack the sophistication to examine fully aspects of class, or perhaps we've been looking in the wrong place, or to be more exact only looked at and defined by work as the basis of class community and identity presuming that this defines all?

We need a *more* embodied reading of class and consciousness as the ideological sedimentation of everyday discourse (Hey, 2003). Moreover, physically, these occurrences differentiate us to form psychological *capital*² [my emphasis] produced by memories, desires, rage, shame, resentment and pain as well as pain and pleasure.

This is a vital point to understand here that in defining class only in terms of the structural or economic aspects, restricts or denies a distinct working class culture separate of the structural, a working class experience, or are we saying that

² Hey defines psychological capital as 'glossed into ideas of self- esteem, confidence, self- belief, and shades into Bourdieu's concept of habitus.

discourses of working classness, even as a lived identity disappear along with the jobs?

To bring these arguments together, we are not looking at class as a collective or a homogeneous group, instead, there is a shared understanding; a way of being, or of knowing, that is learned from where we are, that is active in experience of class. In rejecting the idea of working class as a collective I am also rejecting Giddens's (1990, 1991) and Beck's (1992, 1994) individualisation theory which rejects class as having no place in a modern 'dynamic, reflexive and globalised world' (Savage, 2000:101). This demand on reflexivity, it seems to me, presumes a freedom to construct a reality and to be reflexive within societal structures over which we have no determination. I question the extent people can realise individualism considering restrictions that are outside of our control. The limitations upon the extent to which we can make choices within our lives is surely one of the positions of class? Our position, our way of being in the world (Dasein), is alongside things over which we have limited control. However our Dasein is also culturally informed which shows a level of agency: our Dasein is working class.

'It was a shit job, but it was a job we were mates together y'know?' (Kev)

Moving from theories of class to definitions of class resulted in a domination of those theories defined by occupation, influenced by Weberian theory of status and recognition of cultural aspects of class (although the perception of 'working class' remains that of one group). As Savage (2000:24) argues this led to:

A necessary presumption of homogeneity of groups with the stratification by occupation, a class consciousness with its Marxist overtones paradoxically nestled within a functionalist approach to class stratification.

Here we hit a potential problem. In examining the working class by elaborating class culture - notably by examining class consciousness and class awareness - work influenced by Goldthorpe and Lockwood (1969) developed a discussion of the differing values and attitudes of different types of workers (traditional, instrumental,

privatised, etc.). This recognises the differing values and attitudes of workers, especially as their work was conducted amongst skilled and some of the highest paid workers in industry at that time. Therefore, it is not surprising that their work showed a differing attitude towards class which then exploded the myth of a class conscious and a homogeneous working class. There is, though, a problem: that having exposed the myth of homogeneity, we have lost the availability to talk of a group that often do define themselves (and are defined) by their position in terms of relationship with state institutions; a group with a, (however loosely woven) shared history/culture:

When we speak of a class we are thinking of a very loosely defined body of people who share the same categories of interests, social experiences, traditions and value systems, who have a disposition to behave as a class, to define themselves in their own actions and in their relation to other groups of people in a class. (Thompson. 1978:85)

For Thompson the working class evolves and changes through history but is *culturally dynamic*. Discussions of the embourgeoisement of workers in more affluent manufacturing industries are resonant of class positions within manufacturing industry at that time, a return to the area, and talks with the children and grandchildren of those workers would reveal a different position. It is the very fact that working classness changes – even for ostensibly similar workers - and is self-defining that is missing from so much of the literature on the working class. Yes we are a group that is impacted upon and vulnerable to poverty, policy changes, discrimination and derision, but we are also a group bound by tradition and values informed by experience. In an area like the Midlands, those traditions came from industrial work. Working in large manufacturing plants, defined by your job, your skill and ability to work, socialising with the same people day in day out, trade unions, jobs for life and life-defining jobs. As that way of working has largely gone, that way of interpreting, understanding and that particular experience of working class has dissolved into, albeit *living*, memory.

Beck (1999) goes as far as referring to class as involving 'zombie categories' (in Hey. 2003) referring to the loss of working class identity from class, home and community. As I have said there may be a lack of direct references to class in my fieldwork, but I do not comply with Beck's assertion of zombie classes. Yes, to an extent discussion of class became redundant along with the people and the jobs, but this misses the point; being working class is not just about doing working class jobs, the working class continue when the jobs don't. It would be easy to presume that working class identity died with the jobs, but the fact that the nature of work (and for some unemployment) has changed the way we live means that those ways of being evidently working class has gone, but the dynamism of working class culture means the culture changes. Just because people may now present the self in discourse as more self-defined individual rather than the class conscious worker does this really mean that working class is no longer a viable identity, that class is dead?

Is there anybody out there?

So in asserting that class still *exists* in the day- to-day reality and identities of the people in the pub, I want to return to the point that I may be tackling an area of some contention within the academy and society. Class may evoke unease amongst sociologists, talking about class may to a degree also create unease amongst the people I researched with. Their unease would not have been based in wanting to avoid being labelled an un-reconstructed Marxist or wanting to avoid monolithic discussion of structure post –structuralist arguments, they would have wanted to avoid defining in terms of class due to ideas of 'pollution'. The working class who are perceived as the undeserving, the ones who don't look after their children, who don't work, who don't care for their homes, have dirty net curtains. But to deny class as a lived experience for this group is not representing their lives or experiences correctly. Just because I, as the researcher in this process, find it difficult to locate myself in the theoretical milieu that is class theory in the academy presently, does not mean that both myself and the people in the pub do not have to deal with class

on a daily basis, class structures our experiences whether we vocalise it or recognise it:

Where Marx was onto something was in his insistence that the material circumstances of people's existence – physical-financial, environmental- do matter in influencing their life chances, their sense of identity, and the historical part which they and their contemporise may (or may not) play. Whatever the devotees of the linguistic turn may claim, class is not just about language. There is reality as well as representation. Go to Toxteth, go to Wandsworth, go to Tyneside, go to Balsall Heath, and tell the people who live in the slums and the council estates and the high rise ghettos that their sense of social structure and social identity is no more than a subjective rhetorical construction. It seems unlikely that they would agree. (Cannadine. 1996:19-20)

Cannadine's point was exemplified in other research I was involved in examining the New Deal for Communities Initiative³. The research focused on the impact of Government funding for a major project to promote healthy lifestyles within a group of estates in an area, just a few miles from my estate. The life expectancy for the people on the estates on which I was working was ten years less than those who lived over the main road in a slightly more affluent area, a situation that is reflected across the city (and the country) for people corralled on certain estates/ areas. An issue that was contentious in my research findings was that the barrier to opportunities for health/ education - in essence life chances - is not just the attitudes of individuals; there are real constraints for people to contend with, as Cannadine (1996:19) continues: 'Class indeed may take place in the head; but it has never

³ Research project funded by the NHS Executive (West Midlands) of the Department of Health, conducted in a Midlands New Deal for Communities (NDC) areas in 2004 concerning low uptake of health initiatives in poorer communities.

existed solely in the head or the eyes or the words of the beholder, social reality always keeps breaking in'. Social reality here being the pragmatic approach especially concerning available resources.

Neo-liberal approaches to improving health usually focus on spending large amounts of money on research projects presuming that the resulting education on healthy eating will change people's eating habits, when in the case of the estates the people were mainly dependent on a shop that didn't stock fresh fruit and vegetables, and the food that was stocked was over-priced. In presenting my findings to 'stake holders' I raised two important points about understanding the structural and the cultural aspects of working classness. First the structural, healthy eating education doesn't address the people's problem of getting off the estates to go shopping. This was primarily due to few people owning cars in the area⁴, and secondly, the buses that served the estates usually would not stop due to the bus drivers perception of problem passengers - young people who may start fighting or may be drunk or high, too many women wanting to get on with pushchairs and people being too argumentative about the bus being late or not stopping. It was difficult for people to get off the estates to shop, and the local shop did not sell much fresh produce, but the local chip shop provided a meal deal of sausage and chips for 99p. To produce meals adhering to the healthy eating plans promoted in the area you would have to cost-in getting a bus or a taxi to the nearest shopping area (both nearest shopping areas are two to three miles away) add on cost of cooking (bearing in mind most people are on payment schemes for fuel so pay a higher rate). It makes more sense to buy sausage and chips for 99p. So this can be seen as a fiscally sound decision to buy a meal that is cheaper than cooking. But it is also informed from a tradition of eating high calorific food from a time when people were employed in heavy manual work and needed a high calorific diet. This was the 'it's never done us any harm and we like it', culturally informed, choice that was at

⁴ Workers at the local car plant owned cars through a monthly payment scheme so when the plant closed the cars were returned to the plant.

the time not fully understood by those promoting 'Healthy eating'. Talking with people about healthy eating education and promotion in the area met a wall of derision from people, summarised by statements about 'telling us what to do when they don't know owt' and 'it's been good enough for us so why change' and of course 'I aye gonna spend leccie money on crap that they won't eat anyway'. The project, though obviously crucial to improve health chances through changing eating habits, was almost doomed to failure as it did not appreciate both the very real structural and cultural components of people's eating habits. There was a presumption of ignorance on the part of the people, but the premise of the project was also informed by a neoliberal approach, that information would provide change, that people's agency for choice here was built on poor information rather than structural barriers, that people's agency to make choices other than those prescribed derives from poor cultural resources. Difficulties were also exasperated by the point that the agencies⁵ located themselves in disused council houses; much to people's annoyance: 'someone could be living in them houses, do they know 'ow long it takes to get a place our Patrick, Gale and the babee 'ave been waiting ages' (Jane).

As said the major concern was low life expectancy due to diet, but also drinking and smoking, low life chances due to poor educational achievement, combined with tackling problems of dependency on social housing and high unemployment rates. Again my research findings show that the barrier to opportunities for health/ education, in essence life chances, is not just the attitudes of individuals; there are real structural barriers for people to contend with. This would have been greater understood if other researchers representing the stake holders had literally spent some time in the field; as Malinowski advocated so many years before, that you cannot understand people from the comfort of a library, -for this we can replace office in a disused council house- you need to learn the language, engage with

⁵ The project provided an alcohol awareness scheme, smoking cessation team, public health awareness group, Adult and continuing education, and community development team. There was also limited access to a community Psychiatrist.

people; that is listen and observe, relinquish power, engage in everyday life, eat the food in order to begin to understand how and why people do things. To return to the problem of shopping example, the nearest shopping areas were a few miles away, when people did shop there it would be the day benefit was paid. Available monies from benefit vary from week to week according to paying out other bills; on weeks where there is money a 'big shop' is done. People mainly shopped in the shops that specialised in low cost frozen food; also the reason why most households have chest or large freezers, these shops also sell low cost staples such as bread, eggs, milk etc., and importantly this food that can be stored and drawn on as needed. Any trip around one of these stores reflects what people buy by the amount of freezers given over to chips or pizza, but also frozen veg.

For the NDCI project, I worked ethnographically on the estates extensively for six months; being around with people in the cafe, in the post office, just being 'around' letting people know I was part of the 'project' on the estates. Being part of class identity is not geographically determined, I was from the next estate over, what was more important was I shut up and listened and I had stories to tell that meant we could keep talking. People spoke of going round to look after neighbours, football for the kids, big family parties that became street parties and just looking after each other. But people reported most of this stopped when 'services arrived'.

To go back to the bus example, at the original consultation meeting with people about their ideas for improvements on the estates, the bus not stopping was brought up by many people it was dismissed in order to discuss 'health issues'. The man who used to run two junior football teams and a 'kick around' for older lads stopped because; even though he had no money before, he had to have a CBR check and do a health and safety course to get money to continue. His response was: 'What you think I'm a fuckin peodo I just get the lads out to play a bit a footie had no money before 'fuck 'em I 'aint doin' it it's disgusting we was just avin a kick around its football for fucks sake get the kids out, out and do it get 'em running around playing football, fuck 'em. (Keiran). The response to any activity on the estates was

similar, as one person said: 'God you can't 'ave shit round 'ere without 'em trying to set up a shitting group when they fuckin goin' they aint doin' any good just stickin' their noses in for fucks sake bugger off they aint gonna make any difference anyway we 'ad the bouncy castle at ours always been alright whar fuckin health n saftey policy flippin what is it? Kids always been alright we raised £250 for children in need last year bastard kids 'ad hot dogs, go on the bouncy castle we raised money for the poor kids then we can' do owt cos they say it's gotta go through them'. (Beryl)

Response to the difficulties of accessing fresh food for the Healthy Eating Project run as part of the NDC initiative was resolved by introducing a farmer's market, of which one of the women told me 'fucking sausages £4 for six what they fuckin doin'?' I use example for the reason that it is a working example of attitudes towards working classness from state agencies, working from an academic informed position, and my standpoint of class as experience informed by structural restrictions and a culture which informs choice and action. In essence this example exemplifies standpoints that frames my approach to class in this thesis, it also reflects general attitudes towards class and agency from state agencies of 'doing unto', but also a rejection from the group of people, that the message had no resonance in their experience, crucially the agencies involved were seen as them, they as other. There is no recognition in the example of the bouncy castle and raising money for 'the poor kids' –an irony that people missed-of people having agency of being able to organise, that they neither wanted or needed agencies to instruct and organise them. We have learned ways of being that has meaning as it is viewed as successful, evidenced in its how we've always done it 'it's never done us any 'arm', but these ways are seen as wrong. As I discussed previously; and will discuss in later chapters, attitudes towards healthy eating projects are viewed as 'them lot'; state services, 'sticking their noses in' but of no value. What is eaten, attitudes towards schooling, parenting, relationships reflect what has gone before what has been successful, but also what marks 'us' out as different to 'them'.

Suffice to say that if class is argued to be defined by position in the means of production, if class is defined by occupational status within the Office of National Statistics scheme, it misses how people work, live lives, experience and create culture. This is a culture which is pertinent to those experiences, to working class identity; working classness is a way of being and a way of knowing, *dasein*. For this reason I have no intention of trying to use the conceptual arguments about class which dominated sociological discussion for much of the twentieth Century in order to frame my study or present its 'findings'. Simply, the people in the pub are working class, they have working class jobs (when they have jobs), define themselves as working class and live working class culture, have identities that are formed and flow out of that culture. But this does present the issue of what is working class culture? I have already defined myself as growing up in a working class background, with working class culture, and as will be discussed in the next chapter, I am also trained as a sociologist and as such I am part of the academic world, living a dual identity in two communities of practice (Lave and Wenger, 1991). But my academic identity has no or little capital in the pub, and as a culture it has no resonance for anyone. In academia my working class identity has some capital (as discussed later) but when it comes to working class culture I find myself at odds with my reality of day-to-day life and my attempts to write about working class culture. As will be discussed I know that working class culture is not the 'chav' phenomenon, but can be partly found in the 'hard working families' mantra that predominates political discourse, but how do you explain *dasein*?

Once in a meeting, in answer to the question 'what are you researching'? I said that currently I was writing about working class culture. The (somewhat predictable, admittedly) reply was 'Do they have culture'? To which my reply was 'of course we do it just doesn't look like yours'; unfortunately I then found myself unable to say what this culture was. As a concept I seem to constantly face the problem of what working class culture is not. In trying to define working class culture I agree to some extent with Williams (1958) speaking of working class culture that it's not: 'Proletarian Art, or council houses, or a particular accent; it is rather, the basic

collective idea, and the institutions which proceed from this.’ (Williams 1958, cited in Savage, 2000:32)

The collective idea and institutions which come out of working classness I would argue that Williams is talking of here are the ways of knowing, of being that create our identities and a form of pride that is missing from some accounts of working class life, and for this thesis forms my understanding and use of the term working classness. Working classness, working class identity is what the people in the collective idea and institutions which come out of working classness I would argue that Williams is talking of here are the ways of knowing, of being that create our identities, and for this thesis forms my understanding and use of the term working classness. Working classness, working class identity is what the people in the pub *do*, and how they understand and express those doings. It will be replicated in pubs across the Midlands, and across the country within similar communities.

‘And you think you’re so clever and classless and free But you’re still fucking peasants as far as I can see’ – ‘Working class hero’ John Lennon.

It’s not just my area; working class identities are replicated and experienced across the country, and class is a lived experience for those who live in these areas and live these experiences. It is not just that with the exception of a couple of people everyone has a ‘working class job’ or is unemployed, our children go to local schools with low to mixed academic results, our health and wellbeing results are poor to mixed, we live on an estate corralled in an area, tied to those resources, interacting with state services that define us and serve us as working class. So it is not just the group or the estate that defines as working class, local state institutions define and serve us as a working class area and, if for no other reason, this is what class means and why class matters.

I stand with Mike Savage’s (2000, 32) statement that: ‘Class matters because people think it matters. So long as it is salient, class should be a matter of interest, whatever problems there may be in providing a satisfactory deductive concept of class’.

Now the people Savage is referring to here I presume can be taken as 'people', society at large who operate within the phenomena that encompass class, those living in the various forms of deprivation and locale as emphasised in Charlesworth's (1999) work, but those who live the experience of being working class with the historical and empirical trappings that go with it. For me it is evident that class matters as just by talking with my Midlands accent (however softened by travel and education) marks me as working class to those with middle class accents, and as a slightly posh to those in the pub who have proper Midlands accents. Outside of the Midlands my accent is noticed and identifies my class, though in the North there is the class divide of people from the Midlands manufacturing areas who are perceived as the soft working class, the softer manufacturing jobs do not having the same cultural capital as mining or docking work. But, for all of us, those industries have gone, so why hasn't class identity died with the jobs, or will class die as the generations who worked in 'working class jobs' die? My argument is, as already stated, that working class identity and culture is dynamic and it changes. You need to wonder if there is a presumption that the working class identity that was tied to the traditional ways of employment is so negative that people would welcome the opportunity to escape and embrace a new pseudo middle class identity that presumably develops from service industry jobs that supposedly replaced manufacturing in most areas.

'They think we're stupid don't they'. (Sheila)

The trap of negative assumptions of working classness is discussed in Charlesworth's (1999) catalogue of deprivation and depression that he encountered when interviewing working class people in Rotherham. He attempts to analyse working classness through emotion and experience:

If it is fundamental to the existence and reproduction of class that it concerns powerful affinities and aversions to persons, things and spaces, then we will

not understand such a phenomenon by gaining a detached clarity or by exempting reflection from description of experience. For the people about whom this work is written [Rotherham], class is a circumscribed way of knowing the world they did not choose; rather they grew to live with it, they absorbed it as the space absorbed them in demanding that they comport themselves in a certain manner in order to be successful within its parameters. (Charlesworth,1999:64)

He states further that:

Spatiality of places, an imbuing of lived meaning originating in the comportment of those who use the space. Objectivist description cannot account for the matrix of meaningful practices through which phenomena actually becomes meaningful. (Charlesworth,1999:63)

Although generally a rather depressing description of working classness, I fully agree with the assertion that objectivist description fails to capture not only the matrix, which is the complexity of working classness. In recognising the absorption of class we have to acknowledge more fully the lived meaning that is at the core of working classness.

The juxtaposition between the economic insecurities of working class life and presumptions of welfare state agencies interventions Re: educating people out of 'bad habits, is captured in Charlesworth's position that people's experiences are sedimented in practices which teach us how to be in a world. By only focusing on the economic relations of class you cannot capture the complexity of class identity, for this reason I use moral economy as way of approaching how class informs identities in working class life and culture. Though E P Thompson originally coined the phrase to describe a specific set of circumstances for urban food riots in a changing economy - a moral economy of the right for the poor to eat - I take the position offered by Scott in "*The Moral Economy of the Peasant: Rebellion and subsistence in Southeast Asia*" (Scott,1976) that those who live in a state of economic insecurity; or subsistence in some cases, that their doxa is informed by a moral economy of custom, social mores and values that both create and reinforce our way of being.

To expand; Scott refers to sets of economic principles by which traditional societies live by, creating mutual understanding, social networks and social units which exist to ensure security in times of adverse conditions. Scott focuses on how these networks, social units and values; these social ties, operate to prevent the individuals in traditional societies from behaving to maximize personal advantage. I would though take this further as in creating the social networks and ties we create way of being, roles and expectations in order to secure the survival of the social network as a whole society. To take the cultural turn further imagine the moral economy as a form of Kula ring (Malinowski, 1922) inequality operates within a hierarchical system where there is recognition on all parts, the 'gift' be it exchange of labour, recognition of difference or deference to hierarchy, demands reciprocity, a kula network that is pragmatic in order to secure the survival of the social network.

The shift to a 'paid' economy changed the structure of working class people's lives, and so the mores and values within the moral economy changed along with the economic structure. New social relationships formed out of which came not only new social relationships within class, but a different, more unequal division between state and working class. We have learned ways of being that has meaning as it is viewed as successful, evidenced in its how we've always done it 'it's never done us any 'arm', but these ways are seen as wrong. By only focusing on the economic relations of class you cannot capture the complexity of culture that reinforces class Identity for this group, for us, class is identity but an identity that may seem amorphous if you are not part of it, but class is learned and marked on us. It is not so much a problem that we don't talk about but rather class is presumed and is how we 'know how'.

As I will discuss in later chapters, attitudes towards, for example, healthy eating projects are viewed as coming from 'them lot'; state services, 'sticking their noses in' but of no value. What is eaten, attitudes towards schooling, parenting, relationships reflect what has gone before what has been successful, but also what marks 'us' out as different to 'them' - that is, moral economy:

In response to this I turn to Mau's (2003) work in answer to unequal distribution and moral economy. According to Mau the inherent problems of unequal distribution within society is offset by the welfare state as a form of an equalising distribution:

...the welfare state and the social acceptance of its effects as a 'moral economy'. This institutional and attitudinal arrangement encompassed both the principle of reciprocity and a commitment to the fate of the disadvantaged. In view of the rights-based approach of modern welfare state institutions, the concept was paradoxically redirected from claimants of resources towards their providers: moral economy became primarily that of the net sponsor of the state budget and social insurance. (Mau,2003: 275)

Mau's *homo reciprocus* did not expect an equal return, but was content with the collective management of contingencies and risks.

This takes us further forward in understanding the role of the welfare state in offsetting the realities of inequality through provision of the right to free education, health care and affordable social housing. The key point here is that post war welfare provision was seen as a return on continuing inequality, but the 'right' aspect of this ideology is disappearing under responsibility ideologies which penalise those who are the most dependent on a welfare state, the right to welfare provision is being replaced by the responsibility of people to take care of themselves and their communities. The rights we used to think we had, especially to full employment and a well-funded welfare state, were gradually dismantled during the 1980s by conservative governments in Britain and elsewhere. Rather than rely upon the government to see to our every need, we were asked to take responsibility for ourselves and dedicate at least some of our time and concerns to the broader welfare of the community (See Taylor, 2001). The move away from *homo reciprocus* continued in the political ideologies of Tony Blair's Labour government elected in 1997. Debates promoting responsibilities over rights were central to the governments theme of Active Citizenship emphasising the need for people to be responsive, participative and responsible members of society, a theme continued and developed by the coalition

government election in 2010 with the promotion of 'Big Society'. This flagship policy particularly promoted by David Cameron, promotes the development of homo economicus espousing as it did taking power away from politicians and empowering citizens to take more control and responsibility over their lives and communities forming social solidarity and individualism in a free market economy (See Scott, 2011). Fundamental within neo-liberal ideologies within 'Active Citizenship' 'Big Society' is a lack of recognition within this new order of the lack of provision for groups existing in poverty and so provision of health care and affordable housing is seen as being drain socially and economically with high demands from working class groups.

Conclusion: One of us

Class is recognised in the ideas of them, they and other. As I have said I was recognised as 'one of us' though a slightly strange 'one' at times but still us by people in the pub. Being part of a shared understanding, history, dasein, behaving, dressing, eating, drinking, being culturally recognisable as us is as much part of working class identity as the signifiers of public school or university is to other classes. Defining other is part of daily discourse. Throughout the research people refer to 'them' or 'they' this is the other of making 'other'. Class discourses may seem to have disappeared as there are other 'others' to divert attention. References to 'them'; the government, moving jobs abroad were nearly as common as 'them' immigrants, pakis, Muslims⁶ coming here and living off the state. The they here are not the invisible managers which would represent the middle classes here as referred to by Pyke (1996) they are the people who are 'rich bastards without working for it' 'born with silver spoon in their mouths' 'inbred gits', and to quote Carl, 'They're for themselves aint they, private schools, marry their cousins to keep their money they'll be born with three legs soon not just mad' or Eileen 'You have to vote for Labour it's the closest thing we've got to look after the workers, they're a pile of shit but it's all we've got to keep them buggers off our backs a bit.' The they and them is a term

⁶ Pakis as a term changed to Muslims post 9/11

that is used and understood, what needs to be understood here is they and them is used with equal disdain for both those who would be considered to be the middle and upper classes, as well as those who represent the state, as will be shown in discussions about teachers and social workers later. To an extent there is no blurring of boundaries, other is 'other' they and them.

Chapter Two: The call of the ethnographic life

As a woman trying to make her way in sociology, it was a near inevitability that I should be concerned with gender. And coming from a working class background, class too would also be an issue.

As an undergraduate student I became confused by the often negative representation of white working class life which seemed to confine women in a negative and passive way to the realm of the domestic and (in the case of a lot of studies on white working class life) to be invisible. Where white working class women were visible, as in the case of 1960's social reality films, such as *Up the Junction*, *A Taste of Honey*, and *Saturday Night Sunday Morning*, working class women are either drunken loud mouths who are sexually promiscuous, harridans who bully our husbands and smother our children, tricking men into loveless marriages while giving them respectable net curtains, or we are powerless, weak, feckless women who are preyed upon by predatory men. Perhaps we are both? For me, working as an undergraduate student, however, these representations offered a closer reality to my experience as a working class woman than the descriptions in the academic literature I was introduced to regarding class and gender. For this reason I wanted to challenge constructions/ideologies of working class women's lives, to examine my experience of the 'everyday life' of being a white working class woman.

Drinking in the pub one afternoon listening to the conversation of the women I was with I began to think about our lives and experiences and how, when teaching class or gender theory, I felt either that this group are only partially represented -i.e. through education, health, violence or work – in a way that just doesn't catch the texture of our lives, or that we are presented as victims. Where are the positive images of women such as us? Around that table were women who knew the legal aspects of the benefit system and should be employed by the Citizen's advice Bureau, they knew the council policies and legal requirements on housing better than most of the housing officials, the group I was sat with had a network of social and cultural capital that meant they could survive in times of poverty and physical

and emotional stress, especially if the stress is caused by state agencies. There we were sat as a group of women, our kids playing outside, talking about money, kids, saggy arses, who has any phone credit - general talk that reflected our realities. It was these women I wanted to write about, using the pub as the backdrop, as it is where everyone meets and talks, to examine constructions of gender and class in theories of working class women, and the experiences we share.

But first I want to address the epistemological background of the construction of class that informs approaches to theorising working class women-and men's- lives. I will draw on Lynette Finch's work *The Classing Gaze* (1993) which I have found particularly useful.

She describes her study of constructions of the working class as 'the history of an idea' (Finch:1993) Finch's work focuses on the process from the mid nineteenth century that see the emergence of the idea of the working class that still predominates in current sociological approaches to the working class. Finch argues that in the mid nineteenth century, 'a particular understanding and a particular way of speaking about, acting upon, organising and reacting to – in short a discourse of – a section of society emerged' (1993: 2). Now it is clear that the middle class is also a discursive creation, but what is of interest here is how discourses of class are controlled and maintained within bourgeois institutions, how the educated middle classes categorised and made sense of another section of society that they defined as the working class.

From the beginning to the early middle part of the nineteenth century the observation, naming and categorisation of what was to become the working class began. Previously the terms were more fluid - the poor, urban poor, lower orders, lower classes - but coalesced to describe a working class. It was in identifying itself that the middle classes began to define and describe themselves against 'the other', the working class. The theorising and categorising of the classes had begun (discussed in chapter one), speech was examined and there was certainly an

obsession with morality that mirrored the emerging definition of the feminine moral middle class woman (Discussed in chapter four).

One of the most difficult aspects of my work was bridging the gap between discussions of class as a theoretical concept, going home and going down the pub where being a working class woman was not a theoretical standpoint but a lived reality. Moving from the concept, the idea, to daily existence, from the description of the accepted canon on class to how my neighbours, pub friends and myself lived our lives. The two, to a large extent, did not, do not, match the vast majority of current sociological theory; representations do not match with the experience. The problem in terms of defining and then writing my thesis is what should be its purpose, in the light of this gap. Beck (1979, cited in Anderson et al, 2003:77) contends, 'the purpose for social science is to understand the social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape the action which they take within that reality'.

The purpose for the researcher it would seem, having identified a group or phenomenon to study -in this case gender and class - is to identify how said group understands and shapes their reality. But *theoretical* justification of the research is a crucial part of the research and thesis process. The researcher has to identify how their understanding is shaped by specific theoretical influences on studying the social world (David and Sutton, 2004:45). So the theoretical framing of any piece of research needs clear justification alongside the methodological choices which are obviously informed if not prescribed by the theory. Again I find myself in difficulty, the discussion of theory does not quite match the experience, and my methodological choices. Our symbolic systems enable us to be recognised and be a part of something, where not only our own experiences but those of people we know, family and people before us frame our way of knowing and behaving but also mark us out as different. The aspects of working class, the culture that defines us as different is also what drives our everyday lives, makes sense in a world where how we dress, behave and speak marks us as different, and for me presents the problem of how to represent the every-day life of people how do I present the voice of this group?

As will be discussed later, ethnography gives me access to people's lives and experiences but creates problems in the writing of those lives and experiences. It would be simple to say grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967 Babbie, 1979 Fox, 2004 Berg, 1989), offers me the opportunity to bring the field to the theory, but these are the theories that, rather arrogantly, I want to challenge. But you have to start somewhere and I will discuss further the theories and writing about the white working class.

Diane Reay (2000) tells us that as a researcher she was confronted with the problem of meeting the expectation of the academy in terms of theorised accounts and giving voice to her respondents. Reflexively, I am native and anthropologist, respondent and the researcher, the agent and the subject of research. Because of my identity, what Reay argues is the case, re: meeting the demands of the academy and her respondents, takes on a different flavour in this thesis. Reflexivity (being simultaneously the agent and the object) is an existential foundation of my thesis, so it is less a topic in my thesis than something to be *exemplified* throughout; positional reflexivity should enable me to address the codes of place, positional power and people's biographies as mine 'map' onto theirs in many ways. Working ethnographically provided me with an opportunity to examine sense making, codes, experience and production of identities. To quote Doug Macbeth:

Rather than a reflexivity of professional self-reflection, textual deconstruction, or methodological procedure, reflexivity in an ethnomethodological mode stands on behalf of indefinitely distributed practices of "world making" rather than belonging to the exercise of professional analysis, ethnomethodological reflexivity points to the organization of ordinary sense and meaning—how order, fact, and meaning in everyday life are produced as practical objectivities (<http://doingmodernity.blogspot.co.uk/2012/05>)

The problem of meeting the methodological demands of the academy first came to my notice when presenting my material at workshops and conferences. There were common themes to questions that I have been asked when presenting material from my fieldwork. These questions fall into the categories of 'do they know who you

are', and, 'aren't there ethical problems in that we may be able to find these people?'

The last point first: such ethical issues are a matter of constant debate in anthropology and amongst ethnographers, see Murphy & Dingwall (2001) Hammersley & Atkinson (2007). The problem for ethnography here is that the gold standard for ethics is designed around a medical model, encapsulating informed consent, the right to withdraw and the requirement to do no harm.

Initially my response was always people in the pub know what I am doing, I am part of the conversations, and if there are things they don't want me to know then they will not be discussed. If they do not want to include me in discussion they will exclude me; they have the power and they can and do exclude people. I have no power as the researcher here as will be discussed later. Then in addressing the problem of consent I would recognise it is difficult when it comes to people wanting to withdraw from the process as there is a presumption of an imposition by me the researcher of the research question and outcome. I have identified a phenomena of exchange of social and cultural capital that I want to watch being played out, so to speak, in a group. I cannot predict what will happen, how things become meaningful, who will be involved to lesser or greater extent, falling outs or whatever but I can be assured that my presence is not the only causal factor in what happens, I am part of the group. For the people that I had been researching with, a group of sociologists turning up in the pub would be of no great consequence to them, a point I will return to later. This is not meant as a flippant remark, I recognise as ethnography is presented as a means to gain access to local cultural life through being participant - either overt or covert - ethical issues of any research method demand clear and thoughtful justification especially in today's academic environment.

As Fox states: 'it is usual in arguing your methodological choice to spend a good three pages explaining your unconscious ethnocentric prejudices, and various other cultural barriers' (Fox, 2004:4) But to reinforce the point I am part of the group, the danger to the group might be an increase in the classing gaze through my work, but

does this mean I should not attempt to present a different approach to understanding the lives of the women within the pub? Continuing to read Fox questioning the rights and wrongs of participant observation I found myself agreeing with his point:

I realised that these doleful recitations of the dangers and evils of participant observation are a form of protective mantra, a ritual chant similar to the rather charming practise of some Native American tribes who, before setting out on the hunt or chopping down a tree, would sing apologetic laments to appease the spirits of the animals they were about to kill or the tree they were about to fell. A less charitable interpretation would see anthropologists' ritual self-abasements as a disingenuous attempt to deflect criticism by pre-emptive confession of their failings ... relying on our belief that such awareness and candid acknowledgment of a fault is almost as virtuous as not having it. (Fox, 2004, p.4)

The mantra of 'informed consent, the right to withdraw and the requirement to do no harm' in this study presents particular questions as the usual ethics outline is premised; in the first two statements, on the researcher as outsider, having a higher form of power in the situation and having 'an agenda' in the sense of hypothesis/ research questions and that a participant can opt to withdraw from engaging with. There were no informed consent forms or debrief sheet; it would have seemed strange in the situation filling out a form to consent to what?

This study does not follow the norm of the researcher as outsider, as with Lisa McKenzie's (2015) study of estate living I am part of the group, I lived and continue to live in the area studied, I did not leave either in the geographical, cultural or 'end of study' senses.

The ethical obligation to 'do no harm' possess the challenge in this research and brings the above points into focus through the lens of symbolic violence.

I have anonymised names and places which usually reassures the academic audience but does not really address the point here. The question shows a lack of recognition of the impact of symbolic violence in the experiences and realities of people's lives. The reality is that people - those sat in the pub day-to-day - would

experience little harm in being found, since the harm intrinsically has already occurred. That is, the harm from 'the violence which is exercised upon a social agent with his or her complicity' (Bourdieu & Wacquant 1992:167) in the divisions of class and gender with which they live and marks them as different from those they are compared to. Turning the academic gaze on the group risks further harm by exposing a group of white working class women to further pathologising of their lives unless the relationality of habitus is acknowledged. What is central here is the relationality of habitus. Habitus 'makes sense' only in the context of specific local context or 'fields' –the 'games' for which 'the rules of the game' equip us. (Lawler. 2005:110)

To return to Macbeth's (2012) point the task is to understand 'the organization of ordinary sense and meaning—how order, fact, and meaning in everyday life are produced as practical objectivities' how we as working class women make sense of our world and as active social agents produce our lives using the 'the rules of the game' with which we are equipped but that also make us out to be different especially to governmental agencies such as social services-etc. Fear of exposure to Social Services, the Police, or the Benefits Agencies, is important to them; us⁷, as a daily threat and reality. The fact that I was a student writing and reporting about our joint experiences held no threat of exposure at all - they are our experiences would I not also be exposing myself? The academic gaze is not so much a threat, it does not make people as vulnerable as the theories produced within the academic realm which inform the policies and practices of the services that people do want to avoid, especially in the context of the Impact Agenda. The harm has been done in creating and re-creating the idea of difference, but then having made difference exposing those without the symbolic power to scrutiny to re-inforce and pathologise difference within the academy.

⁷ I was once reported for working when claiming which luckily was untrue as I had signed off a couple of weeks before. Obviously I had upset someone.

Us and ours/they and them: Insider outsider perspectives

The question 'do they know who you are?' raises a myriad of other questions, I am an insider researcher in this group though this is a statement with caveats, which I will discuss in detail later. As an insider researcher my work is obviously 'conducted with populations of which the researcher is also a member' (Kanuha, 2000:3). As researcher I share a cultural base and class and gender identity with the group. Adler and Adler (1987) state that an insider status gives ethnographers a certain amount of legitimacy, so participants are more likely to be open so that there may be greater level of credibility to the information gathered. They also argue that being an insider enables a greater level of openness and trust to the research (see also, Brannick and Coghlan, 2007; Asselin, 2003) in contrast to that of the outsider perspective where participants may be resistant in allowing access because of a perceived stigma. As Asselin states: 'it is as if they feel, you are one of them and it is us versus them (those on the outside don't understand)' (Asselin, 2003:70). So in answer to the question raised earlier from the conference the answer is I'm an insider. People did know who I am in the sense that I was a sociology student doing fieldwork for my PhD, yes people did know who I am. People knew I was writing about being working class and about our experiences of being a white working class women. People knew that I was writing about what we did and discussed, and generally what happened in the family room of the pub. This is a crucial point, it was and is what we did that my research focuses on, as I was part of the group, not only in that I drank, discussed, babysat, filled in forms, attended meetings with teachers, social workers, police, bailiffs etc. but my experiences, historically (then and still now) resonated with the experiences of the women I was with.

In another sense, the answer to the question of: do they know who you are? Is, 'well sort of'. But this is an important point. I spent a lot of time on the estate when I was growing up, but I did not go to school there, I did not have my first jobs or relationships around there, so there is a distance and I cannot join in some of the

local detail of the stories told. I do not have those *local* experiences of the sadistic teachers at the local senior schools in the 1970's, the landlord of the pub who let you drink in the pub, underage, so long as your mom didn't notice, first dodgy jobs and relationships, I was not there. But people did know and remember me, and I have my own experiences of sadistic teachers in senior schools in the 1970's, underage drinking, dodgy first time jobs and relationships, they just happened twenty miles up the road. As with most cities, a twenty mile distance makes a difference, my accent is slightly different to the rest of the group, the culture where I grew up was more coal fields and foundries, less factories, so a slightly different culture, but these are small details.

I may be an apprentice sociologist, but I have the experience to tell my own stories that resonate with those of the group, I have a 'feel for the game' (Skeggs, 2004) that is not always emphasised in research. For instance, I noticed a disturbing trend when teaching undergraduates, and in the literature we present to undergraduates. There is a way of talking about the researched, or society in general as 'they'. It is common for undergraduate students when discussing any given topic to refer to people as 'they'. When presenting my material I have always referred to the women I researched as exactly that, the women I do research with, this has lead, for instance, to me being asked many times if I took a job as a community worker to access this group.

It seems to be beyond the sociological imagination to suppose that I may just have been someone who lived on the same estate and drank in the same pub who is a single parent surviving on a low income, living under threat of bailiffs and teachers, and was part of the group. Now this may also point to an idleness on my part that I researched a group on my doorstep, but it does raise questions about a presumption that researchers are not part of the group they research, and that there is a homogeneity amongst sociologists; do I cease to be a working class white single parent when I am researcher and adopt the identity of sociologist, if so what does

that mean? Do I become gender-less, lose my class experience, history, knowledge and culture?

I am certainly aware of being a working class white woman when in my own department and that experience teaches me that acquiring the qualifications to be a PhD student does not necessarily mean I automatically acquire the cultural capital required to become a full member of the academy. Also it raises the question of can, or should, we research a group of which we are a part? Firstly, there is the question raised by Becker (1967)

To have values or not to have values: the question is always with us. When sociologists undertake to study problems that have relevance to the world we live in, they find themselves caught in a crossfire. Some urge them not to take sides, to be neutral and do research that is technically correct and value free. Others tell them their work is shallow and useless if it does not express a deep commitment to a value position.

He continues:

In the course of our work and for who knows what private reasons, we fall into deep sympathy with the people we are studying, so that while the rest of the society views them as unfit in one or another respect for the deference ordinarily accorded a fellow citizen, we believe that they are at least as good as anyone else, more sinned against than sinning. Because of this, we do not give a balanced picture. (1967:239)

But I argue that I am part of the group I am writing about, and agree that in the main we are 'the sinned against' but as so much work on class objectifies 'the sinning' there is not a balanced picture regardless of researcher sympathy⁸. Also I already have 'a side', working reflexively means that objectivity and neutrality are not an issue for me. In answer to the question 'whose side are we on?' my response has to be well I'm studying to gain (partial) entry to the academy group, but I'm still

⁸ I would also like to acknowledge that I don't like a couple of the people I research with, this is a group I mix with every day and as a researcher in this instance I do not have to agree with the actions of the people I am researching see Blee. (1992).

placed (partially) within the group I study, the question does not have resonance with me as it presumes I am not part of the group.

Getting not to know you, reflections on ethnography.

Rose (1990) points out that conventional social research is criticised for dulling the imagination, for locking the observed inside rigid category systems that have little or nothing to do with their culture. Such categorical systems have everything to do with researcher's culture promoting an insidious institutionalization of social boundaries that separate us, the observers, from them, the observed. And perhaps most telling has become rather tedious, if not boring, thus losing its power to convince (cf. Rose 1990).

I agree with the initial premise here that research has tended to lock the researcher and the researched into categories, but I continue to have difficulties with the idea of 'our research culture'. This call to homogeneity of method has led to research which, in the main, is a reflection of the institutional realities of where we learnt to be the researcher. But to what extent do we actually carry our training into the field? To what extent do we leave most of that training, in this case, at the pub door, only to have to face the realities of being the institutionalised research student when the writing has to happen? To what extent can the fieldwork ever be properly reflected in the writing when the audience for our texts are looking for their own identities, realities and reflection? How does this situation impact on our modes of enquiry?

To return to Rose (1987), he writes of his doubts when urged by Erving Goffman to research covertly for *Black American Street Life*. Taking a job as a mechanic and an apartment next to the garage in a predominately black area, Rose finds his role as ethnographer challenging as he is not allowed to use the research tools he has been taught in his years as a trainee academic. He therefore attempts to mimic the street life of the people he is studying, which leads him into ethical as well as academic and physical problems. Rose tells how covert enquiry and the intimacy of engagement it

facilitated, subverted his received assumptions about the practices of ethnographers. He explains how he could not rely on his sacred status of knowledgeable anthropologist to get him out of trouble e.g. when challenged to a fight, or when he tried to out hustle someone, and was expected to pay the consequences. Given the ethical dimensions of his choice of research method, and the difficult emotions that attended his deceptions, and the maddening frustration of not carrying through a scientific method in which he had been trained by books, seminars, professors, and graduate student colleagues, his entire stay in the field was haunted by a sense of intellectual and moral failure; he 'couldn't gather data' (Rose, 1990, pp.11-12).

Although my research was not covert, I can identify with some of the issues that Rose raises. I too was not able to gather data in a way that is recognisable and acceptable to the wider academic audience in the more restricted forms of qualitative research that are frequently described as ethnographic: was I not just sitting in the pub having a natter, looking after people's kids and helping fill in forms, just the same as most people might do with their friends or neighbours? There are three distinct phases where I am actively collecting fieldwork rather than 'just sitting in the pub', but actively collecting fieldwork meant sitting in the pub doing what I normally do I was just recording so to speak some of the things that happen. I do not have a questionnaire to analyse, recorded interviews to transcribe and code; I have notes on beer mats, and field diaries written when I got to an appropriate place to write, a mental Dictaphone developed to retain discussions, and most importantly a deep involvement in what was happening with the group.

Like Rose (1987), my identity as an academic is subverted by not being able to reproduce the research methods I had spent so many years learning about, and since I am also an integral part of the group I am researching, I have no direct claim to objectivity. But more than this am I compromised by being close to the people and the culture I am writing about? Can you really research with people you know?

Out with the lads

Gough and Edwards' *The Beer Talking: four lads, a carry out and the reproduction of masculinities* (1998) is a study of the discursive reproduction of masculinities through organising the recording of a discussion by a group of four male friends '*interacting under the influence of alcohol*', one of whom was one of the researchers. Gough and Edwards report that many of their friends had offered to take part in their study but the selection process offers some insight into perceived requirement of distance between the researcher and the researched. Gough and Edwards selected people who they had had a drink with before, friends with whom they felt comfortable and who were regarded as similar in their outlook. Other mates were thought to be too 'risky' due to their capacity to disrupt proceedings, the idea was to document and analyse the talk of a sample of young males in a typical drinking context (Gough and Edwards 1998).

Gough and Edwards were striving to achieve comparability in terms of gender, age and class background, but also recognised the threat of what happens if participants do something they, the researchers, don't really feel comfortable with? In trying to recreate a 'typical drinking context' they are vulnerable to the unpredictable. Following a predictable route when alcohol is introduced, people say or do things that put the researcher's identity under threat, as is witnessed in the unease of the researcher at certain points in the evening. If other participants became unaware of the tape recorder, the researcher didn't.

In Gough and Edwards's research, the fieldworker is trying to occupy two positions - researcher and participant- throughout the evening. However, the presumed homogeneity of male identity in discourse is shattered when, later in the evening, talk turns to a more sexist and anti-feminist theme and the researcher becomes more uncomfortable:

Ewan is clearly more involved in this scene - and more implicated in perpetuating critical 'backlash' views of a woman (and by extension, women) in a position of power (as the singer in control). As the conversation develops and becomes more derogatory towards feminist women, however, Ewan

distances himself and ends up expressing disapproval ('ohhhh') with George's 'piss flaps' reference (Gough and Edwards, 1998, p. 425)

There is no indication, and we have no way of knowing if the researcher would have reacted in this way if he wasn't at some point going to be analysing this material for publication, at all times during the interaction he was the researcher. In trying to create a site where masculinities are re-produced, can the researcher really be part of the group. In this instance they have set the situation so interaction and discourse will be framed to some extent by the needs of the researcher.

What questions does this raise for the role of the ethnographer? Is it acceptable to 'be' part of the group, to not only draw on the cultural epistemologies of the group to frame your work, but also to share a commonality and history of those epistemologies, or is this demanding a too radical approach to ethnography? Do we need to maintain the distant, objective and disturbingly 'othering' approach of constructing and performing research to maintain its credibility?

Rose (1990) proposes a move towards a methodology which urges a moral and aesthetic practice. Rose asks;

does radical ethnography, one that gets you closer to those you study run the risk of going native and never returning? It is hoped, at least, you will not again embrace the received assumptions with which you, inheriting your academic texts, methods, and corporate academic culture began' (1990:12).

Rose (1990) talks of his anxiety as his identity of ethnographer is 'stripped' away from him while he is working covertly. The 'role distance' between Rose and his neighbours collapsed 'I had no identity, no status to hide behind except what I could pick up locally' (1990:13). Rose alludes to a transition of identities, identities that brings into question the very premises of ethnographic fieldwork, that the ethnographer can enter the field of study and immerse themselves in the local customs and remain the objective academic researcher:

Over the years I felt that the logic of enquiry that I had learned from a graduate education of reading, seminars and talking had been detonated by the field experience. Ethnography as knowledge about our own culture or about others opened up for me as a *radically fractured* way of life. My assumptions derived from reading ethnographies could not be played out in the field given the covertness, lack of explicitness, and lack of the sacred status claimed by ethnographers for their inquisitive role.

(1990:13, authors emphasis).

I can certainly associate with Rose's assertion of a 'radically fractured way of life' living between working as a researcher at university and the field work of an afternoon and evening emphasised for me a massive fracture in the literature and my identity as ethnographer and single parent living on the estate drinking in the local pub. The 'sacred status' of researcher or ethnographer was not available to me in my fieldwork, as stated before, all the women in the group knew I worked as a researcher at the university, and knew that I was writing a PhD about my experiences in the pub as part of the group. This did not give me the status that Rose alludes to. People assumed that I was clever as I worked at a university, I could sign passport forms, I could turn on a useful accent and language for meeting with social workers, teachers, council officials and desk sergeants at the local police station, but my status was very firmly placed; I am a single parent living on the local estate on a low income; as was said many times 'you're one of us'. Being 'one of us' raises numerous points for me that are discussed around approaching fieldwork especially in early debates around feminist ethnography as outlined by Aune (2014)

Researchers' bodies and physical appearance can shape their field experiences, and ethnographers have been alert to the need to dress in a manner that is acceptable to informants. Researchers less often discuss how such variables as ethnicity, class, sexuality, and religion also contribute to ethnographers' gendered experiences. In the case of sexuality, for example, female embodiment may mark the researcher as sexually available, and she may be subject to sexual advances from informants. Dealing with sexuality (how to present themselves, how to negotiate others' interpretations, and how to negotiate sexual relationships) is a challenging issue for ethnographers. (2014:309)

I became aware of the importance of appearance when talking one day to a woman at a bus stop who presumed I was a police woman because I was wearing flat black shoes. Acceptable clothing is not only about being culturally sensitive, clothes demarcate people, wealth and occupation can often be read from clothing. I do dress, though less sexily than some, like the women in the pub. I fit in even though I am considered to be more androgynous than the others. Which takes me to the next point, the challenging issue of 'how to negotiate sexual relationships' places me as both agent and subject - I know the codes, I read them, I can report them in my thesis as will be seen later, I am part of the group that drinks in the pub. The group would have found it laughable that I had status as an academic and I would have been brought 'into line' or more importantly derided and excluded if I had tried to assert an academic status. Academic prowess and qualifications are of little or no value in the daily interactions in the lives of people in the group, and more importantly it was recognised that I did not, and still do not earn very much money.⁹ For the majority of the time spent in the field working I was single and I blush at sexual innuendo. So what status does that give me in a group where your relationship status gives you, well, status, and the role of humour and innuendo is an intrinsic part of the social interaction?

The other fracture is talking and being with the group, and then talking with students and colleagues about class and gender. What the academy generally thinks about class and gender does not match my fieldwork experience, and this continues to be a problem. Having learned the discipline of sociological enquiry, and spent time talking students through the debates on qualitative research methods, I was, and still do face a division between the theory and the experience of fieldwork. A conflict exists between my socialisation as a postgraduate sociology student and my socialisation as a white working class woman who was conducting fieldwork with white working class women. To expand, I experienced a very welcome interest in my

⁹ I was questioned about this many times as people initially presumed that qualifications would mean money. As people found out that I earned less than most of the people who were working, people thought this was ridiculous, what is the point in qualifications if it doesn't earn you more money?

work when, sometime into the research, I began to take initial findings to present at conferences, but the questions I was asked, as previously discussed, on various occasions pertinently highlight the issues of identity and distance of the researcher.

To reiterate at one conference, having presented and discussed some of the problems and questions I was working on e.g. to what extent my ability to 'turn on an accent and process forms with ease' might be influencing my research. I was asked the question, 'as I had spent so much time in the field did I not recognise the problem of "going native?"' Firstly, this showed that I had not presented my material well enough in that, it is the juxtaposition between the two identities that cause issues for the research, and secondly and more importantly, what do you mean 'going'? **I am native**, why presume because I am at an academic conference that I am so different from the women I research with? This again has left me with a problem which is central to my original thought about the representation of white working class women in academic literature, the experience and the texts do not always match. Again, how do you write the experience of the field, if the field experience does not match the text? For this reason, this work is divided between chapters that outline aspects of sociological theory and approaches to class, theories of gender and sexuality to try and place these theories in a context where I can then use my field work to identify where the people of the pub are missing from some literature but over emphasised in other forms, mainly around ideas of white working class people being 'excessive', where my work focuses more on the experience of people using more of their voice than theory. I then focus on women and the emotional capital involved with raising children to be part of the culture in a society that wants them to be different. I finish by looking at the role of violence in the pub and the lives of people in the study, violence being both a definer of working class life in some ways but also an aspect the culture that makes working class people vulnerable.

Chapter Three: The Study

This work is based in an estate pub (hereafter the pub) at the end of the road where I currently live, and where my family have lived since 1939. Physically the estate is bounded by [REDACTED] arterial roads to which the roads on the estate are linked. [REDACTED]

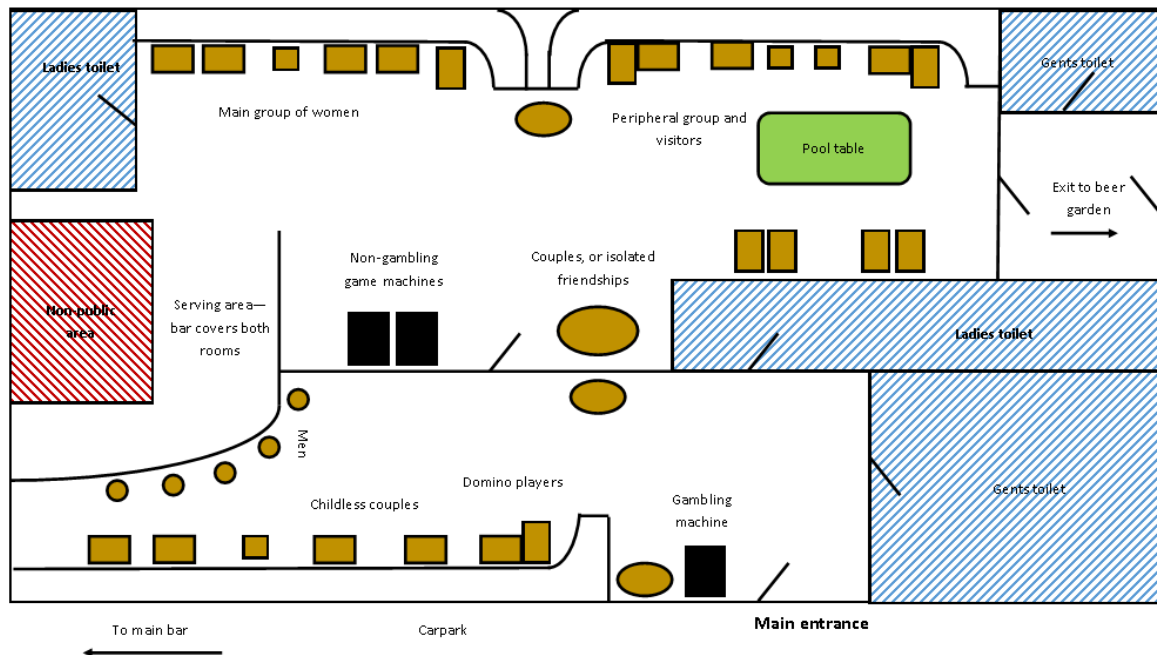
[REDACTED] there is no romanticism here, but it's my home [REDACTED]. We also have [REDACTED] parks within easy walking distance of the estate.

The estate is three miles from the centre of a major industrial city in the midlands and was built between 1920 and 1930 from land given by a local family of philanthropists to build social housing for people being moved from the slum clearances in the city centre. Following the initial influx of people, the next major group of people moved in in the 1940's/50's from private rented accommodation to council accommodation from an area a few miles over from the estate. To give a background of who we are, the local area (and estate) has a higher than national average number of people in social and private rented accommodation, has a higher than national average number of people on all benefits, a higher than national average level of people classified as D/E in terms of social class (the next largest group being C2) and, in terms of qualifications, the largest group represented have no qualifications, followed by those with qualifications at level 1. The area, although having a higher than national average of people aged 0-44 years, also has some of the poorest health reports in the city - it should be noted that during the study four of the women involved died, aged 37, 39, 49 and 53; two with heart problems two with cancer. So, as a general overview, the area has high levels of poverty indicators. Notwithstanding, people tend not to leave the estate; the same families have been

here for generations - in fact, people want to stay here. I returned from university with my undergraduate degree and my young daughter because I wanted and needed to be back; as a single parent I needed to access social capital and the estate is where my cultural capital is meaningful. At this time, the value of my cultural capital was needed - as people told me, I didn't 'have a pot to piss in'; as I'm told sometimes 'your family brought yer back you're one of us'.

The pub is typical of pubs built in this city in the 1920's in that it is larger than most pubs built subsequently, and also in terms of the layout. There is a large bar, separate to the little lounge and family room, mainly used by the men. At the top end of the bar room is a pool table which is kept in good condition for pool tournaments. There is a large original oak bar with brass foot-rail, where most of the men stand to drink, moving the barstools out of the way. Opposite the bar is a dartboard. Tables surround the walls and there are two fruit machines. At the opposite end of the building there is the lounge and the function room which doubles as a family room (kid's room), the garden being reached through the kid's room. The lounge is small and is mainly used by the domino players; who when not playing dominos often drink in the bar, and courting couples, there is a bar and seating around the wall with tables and extra seats, there is also a fruit machine. The kid's room is larger than the bar, there is seating around the wall, tables and chairs, a pool table and a quiz machine. The whole room is run down, it being reasoned that there is no point improving the room as the kids will destroy it (a theory largely based in experience – the time of the study saw a square foot of stuffing removed from the seating, several broken chairs, and countless drinks spilled on the carpet). The garden is large with a slide (which was broken when a drunken man decided to use it) climbing frame and a grassed area. There are also trees which the kids climb and bushes where the kids make dens. Outside tables and benches are provided, but most adults only venture out when the weather is warm.

Family Room and Small Lounge



There is a gender divide in where people drink in the pub. Traditionally the bar has always been a male dominated space, that is to say it was not seen as appropriate for women to drink in the bar as this was a space where men could 'cut loose' swear, play fight, talk about men things, talk about work, not talk to anyone, organise bets, to be able to come in from work with dirty boots and clothes with no fear of making a mess of the floor or furnishings. The little lounge with its slightly better décor and furnishing was seen as more clean, genteel and appropriate space for women, no dirty work boots or clothes, where-as the children's room becomes the children's room because children are not allowed in any other place in the pub. So as taking care of the children is predominantly the woman's job, this space becomes 'women's space'. Of course there is blurring of the boundaries, some women whose children are grown do mainly drink in the bar, but they drink with their partners never on their own and keep to the seating around the edges of the bar room with the men going to the bar to fetch drinks.

For those of us who have children, Saturday afternoons or nights in the bar are special occasions when we do not have children to look after. On Saturday nights

there is would often be a band or Karaoke, so these nights were couple's night out, or groups of singles out on the lash for laugh. Being a woman drinking on your own in the bar means negotiating sexual/gender appropriateness. As will be discussed later, ideologies of hyper-masculinity are the norm in the pub but especially in the bar, men as sexually dominant, violent and generally sovereign shape the gender performance in the pub. For me negotiating drinking in the bar on my own was about asserting that I was not there to find a man to have sex with; there is still the idea that women either on their own or in groups will go to a bar in a pub to attract men, and making terms with what language and behaviour I would accept. As one of the main reasons men don't like women in the bar is a belief that they have to change their behaviour and language- you shouldn't swear in front of women- but as swearing is the norm amongst most of the women this carries little value, it is more to with men wanting to talk with other men without women. Over the time I drank in the bar, my relationship with the domino players from the little lounge helped me be accepted amongst the men who only drink in the bar opening conversations for me to be either on the side of or involved in. For most of the women being in the bar was about being part of a larger group of women, sitting with the women who drank in the bar or a group on a night out.

The estate is predominately white working class, as are the customers of the pub; this is an estate pub. Amongst the majority white group at times there are divides; the few black customers (Caribbean) live in the private rented houses alongside the estate, the main ethnicities are white English and white Irish, with some people taking their self-declared Irish identity back three generations. The more usual white Irish are those who were born in Ireland and those whose parents were born in Ireland. The Irish/English divide only becomes apparent for events such as saint days and rugby tournaments, with occasional battle of the music on the juke box. There are settled traveller families and a couple of settled Romany gypsy families also on the estate.

The customers of the pub are representative of people on the estate as the vast majority of people in the pub are from the estate; and as will be discussed, there are large extended families across the estate who drink in the pub. Few people move away from the estate so there is continuity of families there. There are core members of the family who are daily regulars with others members of the family coming to the pub at the weekends and family functions are always held at there. This is a key point to understanding the connection between the pub and the estate, although increases in beer prices, the smoking ban and the availability of cheaper alcohol from supermarkets drastically impacted on the number of customers in the pub, the pub is still the focal point for family and social events, and is important in estate life. It is not just that drinking is often part of celebrations, the pub is a place that is known and importantly where you know you meet up with people, have a natter, a laugh it is a place to meet that is separate from work and home.

Originally there were two major employers where the majority of the people on the estate worked, which will be discussed in more detail later. The estate is served by two bus routes that match the routes to the two main employers in the area. There is a row of five shops, which periodically change what they sell, but the constant is a small supermarket and an independent butcher. There is a larger shopping area; the high street, within walking distance but, importantly, also on a bus route. On the edge of the estate (also on the bus route) is a Post Office which plays an important part in the weekly lives of people as it's where Benefit books/ cheques and pensions were traditionally cashed before jumping on the bus outside for the high street. Even though benefit books have gone, people still tend to use the Post Office to get their money. The buses are an important part of estate living, about a third of people living on the estate rely on public transport and I was the only woman within the

group to own a car. When you are on a low income bus fares eat into your money, but the buses are vital to getting by on the estate.¹⁰

In the 1960's a new junior and infants school was built, along with a new church; a joke being that the estate pub was built long before the church. There are a variety of secondary schools, faith and non-faith based, mixed and single sex schools, which are again on bus routes.

All-in-all the estate is self –contained, and, as said, people tend not to move off the estate, but, more than that, some of the children on the estate never travel far from it. An example being one of the girls associated with the study who, with the exception of shopping in the local high street and a school visit to the city centre, had never left the estate and had never been more than three miles from where she lives. The lack of this girl's experience of life more than three miles from her home is not uncommon. She has no reason to travel, since all of her family live on the estate and everything the family needs can be acquired within the local area.

The estate houses around 3,500 people. Houses are terraced in sets of four or five, the ending houses being slightly larger and are mainly three bedroom. Each road and grove has a couple of four bedroom houses and there are some five bedroom houses on the estate, the estate being built when families tended to be larger. Although a percentage of the houses are now privately owned as a result of the right to buy scheme, over the estate as a whole just over 40% of the houses are owned. Owned houses are mainly owned by people from the estate rather than external landlords, and the ratio of owned/council differs road to road. About 40% of people in the pub own their home, but many of the houses are still council owned. Considering the pressure on council housing stock, families tend to be able to secure council houses

¹⁰ My neighbour is having to attend hospital 2-3 times a week at the moment, a round trip costing £4.80 each day totalling £14.40 a week out of his £79 benefits, before council and bedroom tax is deducted. Phone calls to benefit and housing services can cost up to £10 a call, his terminal illness means changing benefits which means he has to re-claim all other benefits. Living on a low income sudden unexpected expenditure causes massive economic pressure. We have organised lifts to and from hospital, and he uses the phone from people with mobile phone contracts to save him the money.

on the estate. The reason for this is - and I should state that this is one of the main reasons I started this piece of work - people, or, to be more precise, the women, are skilled in understanding the council points system, an example of social capital in action. Women have in-depth knowledge on the rules of council tenancy knowing how to ensure the rent book can be passed on to family members when someone dies, that points can be increased by claiming the need to be near a family member, or under the new points system that when people bid for an available house that they are also recommended by local council tenants to increase their chances of being granted the house. There is also an increase in male only households where men move in and out of a house where the council tenancy has been taken over by a man at the death of his parents. As women on the estate tend to keep the house when relationships break down, there is a need for men to find affordable local housing, spare bedrooms to rent ensures the house has capacity of occupancy, people have somewhere to live and a small side income. An example of friendship networks in action.

Getting by and estate living

Living in a geographically enclosed and defined area is an easy definition of a 'community', but 'community' as a concept is one I am nervous of using here, for the estate and the pub community can be seen as 'people like us'. Geographically people either live on the estate or within twenty minutes' walk of the pub. The pub itself is a community centre. Some people have moved out of the area, but still use the pub as importantly it is where their social network is, it is where their mates are, where issues are shared. Having kids at the same schools¹¹, using the same shops, roads, buses, doctors, health visitors etc. creates shared experience. Everyone in the same area not only creates a sense of shared experiences; though obviously the level

¹¹ There is a split of schools. With infant/junior schools it is faith schools. At senior level this is more complex as some people choose single sex schools, faith schools or wherever you can get your child into.

of agency differs, it creates the doxa that maintains the codes that inform and sustain the moral economy of 'getting by' that is working class estate life here as will be discussed later.

Living in a confined geographical space means that you learn to be in an area without drawing attention to yourself. Friendship networks extend across the estate, and people tend to know people who live in the block and the surrounding blocks of houses, but there are then hundreds of people you may see daily but you never acknowledge. There is a way of moving around so you are not interfering with others or drawing attention to yourself. This is crucial to estate living as it maintains a stability of living, not getting involved in other people's business, not drawing attention to yourself means that life is quiet. This said, people do know what's going on around them through friendship networks, the point is getting involved, getting involved is seen as good if there is something useful you can do, or poking your nose in if you have nothing to offer. Living on top of each other, as we do, means that people are exposed to people knowing your business which means that you are vulnerable to retribution if you upset people around you. To give examples: Cora, Karen's daughter, has successfully had two families removed from the house next to her and the house over the road from her, as she became fed up with arguments and the children playing up in the road. Cora, like Karen, knows the system well. Being able to keep in with people around you makes you less vulnerable. Two people were reported to the benefits agency for falsely claiming benefits after they had upset their neighbours. The moral code is about living alongside each other without causing problems, being supportive but 'keeping your nose out'.

Reading through the accounts of people's lives in the pub you may, rightly, get a sense of an underlying permanent threat of violence; you may get annoyed or frustrated with the levels of misogyny and/or racism, but this is the narrative of the pub. You may also get a sense of the lack of opportunity for most, and the day-to day grind of getting by. But also I want to show that the pub is a place of great humour,

the support mechanisms that operate are not just about the need for them, they are part of a genuine commitment to others in the group. As with most pubs you can get most things here, the constants being cheap tobacco and meat. Obviously with the skills in the pub there is always someone to fix or build something and if they can't they know someone who can. Favours are part of what keeps people together in the pub. I struggled with the inclusion of pragmatic acceptance, as will be discussed later, as part of my theoretical frame until I recognised that the roles performed in the pub are part of not just the macro structures of class, gender and ethnicity, but the performance of these identities are key to the day-to-day existence of the people in the group. As acknowledged earlier, four of the women involved in the study died whilst I was conducting the field work; three of the women who died had young children and child care continues to be part of the life of the pub. Care of the widowers continues, and in two cases the funerals of the women were paid for in the majority by people having 'a whip round' in the pub to pay. It is a group that provides practical and emotional support, support that is framed by the identities and experiences of people in the pub.

Selection, exclusion and the group

Ethnographic studies usually have a section outlining a selection process of who is involved in the study, this though is a study of a friendship network of which I am a part, I did not have to choose a group, make contact and build trust I chose to write about a group with whom I am very definitely a part. Initially I intended only to write about the women within the main group that is the women who met every-day in the pub. In time I realised that gave a rather limited view of the interaction, some people only came in at weekends but were very much part of the group, these were people who influenced discussions and were influential in what happened. Then there are the women who are part of the group on special occasions, or when everyone is in the garden but these are women who are part of the extended group in the pub. So for me there is no obvious selection process, not only because of the fact that this is a group of which I was a part, but because the group was already clear and formed before the research started, and was not in any way influenced by my initial attempt at a clear (and limiting) boundary. The level of interaction I have with people is guided by the level of

friendship I have with them, but I am known to the majority of people in the pub and certainly all the women. This raises the point of inclusion and exclusion, the women I mix most with, the group I am with because we have children so we share the same space in the pub, we encounter a lot of the same problems and have things in common so we have friendships to a greater or a lesser extent. As for the men in the pub, I have access to some of them through existing friendships through talking at the bar and their friendships with the women. For some of the men I have no real access to talking to as they never come into the children's room or little lounge, and even when I am in the bar other than acknowledging each other there is no conversation and I cannot even eaves drop on conversations since a close proximity to a group of men on my own would not be appropriate, would seem unusual or worse that I was trying to gain sexual attention.

All of the examples given in the study are conversations I was directly part of or was on the margins of. I was not always one of the most outspoken members of the group; this was not a deliberate methodological decision to be the silent listener, this was more about my personality. It would have seemed unusual if I started to dominate or to be more outspoken especially in the larger group discussions since (as will be discussed) my place as the researcher was as a part of the group.

The conversations in the pub drive the themes and the examples I have included the study. There are several factors that influenced what is reported, repetition of themes in conversation or instances of events which are representative of what happens. To expand conversations usually revolve around what is happening with kids and people's sex lives so these themes are throughout the study. As for events, I give examples of the day-to-day, choosing examples that give a feel for the game such as the domino players, who sits where, who wears what. But I also include examples of situations that are less common but not only inform the wider feel of the pub, but help to demonstrate how gender roles in the pub operate and are maintained. For example as I will discuss later I struggled with the inclusion of violence as a theme in the study as I did not want to present a negative stereotypical image of white working class people in a pub. But violence is a part of the pub life and the lives of people when outside the pub. In choosing some of the examples of violence, I am trying to establish various forms of violence, why violence is accepted or even promoted to give a greater understanding of interaction amongst the people in the pub.

Who is who

Obviously, the lives of people in the pub are complicated and intersect, forming identities drawn from shared experience. So I am aware that a little background is needed in order to understand the connections at times. It's difficult to know who and what to include and what to leave out, so I have taken the general structure of the thesis -children, relationships and employment - as a guide.

Su (author): - I was born here, but I grew up in another industrial area about twenty miles away, and spent a lot of time on the estate living with my grandparents. Before I went as a mature student to university I spent time unemployed, but I also worked as a packer, a press operator, a kitchen hand, a laundry assistant and a care assistant before going to a residential Adult Education college which gave me access to university. I returned with my daughter not long after finishing my undergraduate degree and then PGCE. Having completed my Masters I decided to continue studying for a PhD. Except for a brief relationship, I was single throughout the study, no one night stands, much to the confusion and amusement of the people in the pub. I have one daughter Rosemary, and two other children from the pub who I consider part of the family. I was on and off benefits during the study time, sometimes I was working at the university, other times I worked cash in hand as a cleaner and barmaid at the pub, I also worked as an early morning cleaner at a supermarket.

I was a central part of the group, but as will be discussed throughout I was slightly on the margins, my accent is slightly different, I have a degree and sometimes worked at the university and not as cleaner. My daughter went to a different school though she initially went to the local school, and I have no family on the estate now even though my family are remembered

Sheila: - Married to **Sam**, a stormy relationship with frequent break-ups. Sheila has one night stands away from the pub. There are nine children (they have one child together) but only two, Liam and Jordon, lived at home; the others having left home at thirteen as eventually **Liam** did. **Jordon** is the daughter of Sheila and Sam. Sheila's

other boys are to different fathers, the father of two of the boys (twins) had some financial involvement. Sheila and Sam both say they decided to have a child together as she has all boys. He has five girls from a previous relationship that he does not financially support. He wanted a son Sheila a daughter, Sheila won. Sheila does not work and is well skilled in the benefits system. Sam works as a delivery driver, occasionally losing his job turning up for work still over the drink drive limit, but his boss always had him back. Sheila is not generally liked by the men in the pub, they consider her a 'drunken loud mouth slut', but her humour means that she gets along with them being considered a 'character' and recognised for the support she gives to people. Sheila is supportive practically of most of the women in the pub and well liked as a key member of the group. Sheila is at the pub every-day, and the woman I was closest with; she also had a close friendship with Tina, Pat and Sonja. Sheila died as I was finishing writing up.

Siobhan: - was my closest friend in the children's room, her two daughters **Caitlyn** and **Aileen** were most often seen playing with my daughter, they still consider themselves as sisters. Siobhan was married to **Jack** and held a middle management job at one of the food manufacturers that employed many people from the estate. Siobhan died not long into the study. Siobhan was a central member of the group, though like me a little on the outside. Caitlyn and Aileen were very much a part of the kid's room; as will be discussed, and Jack is central to the pub as one of the domino players which will be discussed later.

Tina: - One of the recognised main people of the pub and part of a well-established estate family. Married to **Rich** with two daughters. Tina considers herself and behaves as though she is, if not the pub's, then the kid's room, matriarch along with her mom **Pat**. Tina and Rich's relationship is stable, a point that Tina uses to enforce her viewpoint on any relationship issue. Tina began to work part time at the local school towards the end of the study, Rich has steady well paid work for a major company. Key member of the group, at the pub every-day along with her extended family.

Karen: - One of the main people in the pub, and a well-known family on the estate. Karen has two children who predominately live with their father. Karen works cash in hand sometimes at the pub but during the study was also caring for friends' children. However, her main income is from disability allowance, which she periodically lost at times as the system became stricter on eligibility. Karen's knowledge of the benefits and housing system is one of the reasons I started this piece of work, she is highly skilled on all aspects of benefit claims and housing issues and is consulted regularly about these issues by women in the pub. Karen is a pub matriarch, and an estate gossip.

Jane: - Jane moved onto the estate at the beginning of the study, moving into one of the four bedroom houses with her three children, and her partner **Dave's** three children who are not part of the study. The relationship, though occasionally violent, is stable, meaning Jane often involves herself in advice giving concerning relationships and children. Jane worked cash in hand cleaning, then moved to work part-time cleaning at the school. Dave works semi-independently off the books as a builder and is constantly in work. He is one of the 'disappeared men' meaning he pays no tax or National Insurance so everything is in Jane's name. Though Jane mainly drinks in the bar, they are both daily drinkers, she is part of the group when she has her grand-children and when people are outside.

Becky: - Becky is one of the women who died, dying just at the end of the study. She has two young children; **Katie** and **Amy**, and lived with her parents, **Gaynor** and **Frank**, who are a well-established estate family and members of the pub. Becky in the beginning was claiming various benefits, with Karen's advice, though under pressure from policy changes started a part-time cleaning job, sixteen hours a week to maximise allowances, as well as working cash in hand behind the bar. I worked with Becky both at the cleaning job and behind the bar. Becky was single throughout the study, had various one-night stands with men in the pub and formed a 'fuck-buddy' relationship with a local man which ended when his wife found out. Becky was closest with Sonja, whose daughter she looked after, and April. Becky's

relationship with the group had difficulties, the running joke was that Becky had post-natal disinterest in her children based on the older daughter taking care of the younger one and the group looking out for both of them. Issues such as Becky always having enough money for fags and another drink whilst the girls constantly shared a glass of squash and were rarely given crisps or sweets marked Becky with a reputation as a bad mom which she never overcame.

April: - April lived with her husband and their two daughters **Bethany** and **Martha** in his private house on the edge of the estate. April's two older children lived independently. April worked part-time then full-time in a care home. The relationship between April and her husband broke down when he was arrested for child abuse. This will be discussed later. April had various one night stands with men in the pub, before starting a relationship with **Droopey Stewie**. April and her daughters moved in with Droopey Stewie into a flat on another estate but continued to use the pub. April was closest with Becky, Sonja and Sheila, though the relationship with Sheila was sometimes volatile as April and Sam flirted constantly.

Emma: - Emma's partner **Colin** is one of **Fred** and **Janet's** sons, part of one of the biggest estate families and heavily influential in the pub. Emma rarely brought her children or grand-children to the pub though her adult daughter often joined her but not the group. Although not a daily drinker in the pub, Emma is at the core of the group. Emma is the family main wage earner, working for a major employer in the area. Colin began picking up work with men in the pub when he was made redundant from the car plant. Emma is one of the women I was, and continue, to be close with.

Mary :- Mary, her partner **Lewis** and her five children **Sally–Anne, Heston, Aerial, Ben and Theresa** live in a private rented house next to the pub having left their house on the next estate when they 'done a runner from the rent man'. Mary works part-time in a local café cash in hand and Lewis picks up work from the builders in the pub. Mary is a main part of the group, using the pub for support with what she

describes as her chaotic kids and home. Next to Sheila and Emma, Mary was one of the women I was closest to.

Sonja: - Sonja moved to the area at the start of the study, renting a house near the pub with her young daughter **Alicia**. Sonja had a highly paid job with an International company based in the city, from which she was made redundant due to her drinking. Sonja is largely disliked in the pub, especially by the men who took offence at her appearance, drinking and (majorly) her constant reminders to them that she prefers sex with black men. Sonja had a brief relationship with Rob, but would go to other pubs to find one night stands. Alicia's father occasionally visited but this stopped when Sonja physically attacked him in the pub. Sonja was closest with Becky and Sheila, though most of the group pointed out that Sonja was using Becky to look after Alicia whilst she got drunk or went out which caused tension in the group.

Nicky: - Nicky moved to the estate just before the start of the study with her three children **Ralph, Stewie** and **Seinna**. Stewie and Seinna have the same father who occasionally visited but as he only wanted contact with Sienna and not Stewie contact was stopped. Except for one night stands Nicky was single throughout the study. Nicky occasionally picked up cash in hand cleaning work, but remained on benefits throughout, ironically being tied to being on benefits as she was sent on training courses to improve her 'skills base'; she has basic writing skills and reads with difficulty. This put endless pressure on Nicky feeling belittled by endless courses, as she explains she can do enough to get by and we help with the rest.

Jackie: - Though never part of the group, she has an impact on the lives of the women in the pub. Jackie lives on the estate, moving here not long before the start of the study. Starting a relationship with **Paul** makes her central to the day-to-day goings on in the pub as Paul is from perhaps the biggest and most influential family on the estate and certainly the most influential family in the pub. Jackie's affair with Paul caused many problems. Jackie will be discussed in more detail later. Jackie died not long after the study was completed.

Diane: - Again Diane never became part of the group and generally caused problems for the women. Diane lives in a rented house just up the road from the pub, and began working in the pub as a part-time barmaid, although she was already known to people as she had grown up in the area. Initially Diane was having an affair with **Toby, Paul's** nephew (again part of the big family), which will be discussed in detail later.

Shirley: - Shirley was a peripheral member of the group and again someone I was close to. She came to the estate when she moved in with **Sid** who she had met at the pub quiz. Shirley began working behind the bar, and not long after started a long term affair with Paul.

Dawn: - Dawn lives on the estate with her daughter Scarlet who she had when she was eighteen. When her daughter was born she moved to a flat on a nearby estate but returned soon after sub-letting a flat on the estate found for her by Karen. Dawn has little contact with her mother and is mainly supported by the group and friends, the father of Scarlet has nothing to do with Dawn though he does acknowledge Scarlet.

Other people in the children's room:-

Kirsty: - Kirsty is **Del** and **Kelly's** daughter. Kirsty worked as a hairdresser but stopped working when she moved with her boyfriend to a flat off the estate. This is a violent relationship and Kirsty eventually moved back with her parents.

Lorraine: - Lorraine was a big part of the group. She lives on the estate with her two children **Chloe** and **Anthony**. Lorraine claims benefits and works cash in hand in a local factory and sometimes as a barmaid. Lorraine holds a publican licence but left her pub when the children's father became too violent and returned to the estate. She formed a relationship with **Brian**, who was not part of the pub group (although is friendly with everyone), and their relationship is largely separate from the pub.

Poppy: - Poppy is a big part of the group but moved to a flat on the next estate when her parents died, but she kept coming to the pub as her support network is here.

Couples:-

Celia and Shep: - Both Celia and Shep are from big estate families. They live on the estate with their young son **Quin**. The relationship is stable meaning that both of them often give out advice to others especially the younger couples. Celia works full-time as a care worker, and Shep is 'ganger man' for a building company meaning he is a major part of the work network in the pub. Celia, though considering herself a matriarch in the bar, is peripheral in the group where she is considered a part-time mother having 'offloaded' the care of **Quin** onto her mom.

Janet and Fred: - Janet and Fred are head of one of the big estate families. Their five children are grown and have left home. Though the couple separated due to Fred's affairs they got back together. Both mainly drink in the bar and are a constant source of support and advice for others in the pub. Both are retired, Janet worked as a cleaner and some factory work, Fred worked on the railways.

Andrea and Lucky: - Andrea lives on the estate and Lucky owns a house near the pub. Andrea was married to Alf, and had an affair with Lucky. When Andrea became pregnant with **Carol** the affair ended. When Alf died Lucky moved in with Andrea and Carol. The relationship is extremely volatile. Andrea maintains a relationship with another man in another local pub. Andrea receives benefits as Carol has severe learning difficulties. Carol has grown up believing that Alf was her father, and as her learning difficulties are so severe (her mental age is similar to that of a five-year-old) that story is repeated publicly, although it is commonly known that Lucky is in fact her father. Andrea is on the periphery of the group, being mainly disliked by people in the pub.

Neil and Barbara: - Part of the old estate families, they drink in the children's room together and are generally part of the friendship network. Barbara works as a

cleaner and Neil after being made redundant from the car plant eventually found work at the local hospital.

Kerry and Bob: - Live on the estate with their young son **Declan**. Kerry's older children have left home and Kerry works part-time in a care home. Bob secured work in another car plant when the local one closed. Although they drink in the children's room they spend most of the time playing the fruit machine in the little Lounge leaving Declan with the other women. Kerry is amongst the women declared as having 'post-natal disinterest' as Declan is mainly cared for by his Nan and as such Kerry is not liked and is not part of the group.

Sally and Keiran: - Sally and Keiran both come from estate families, they have a daughter **Polly** born when they were both seventeen. Both Sally and Keiran still live with their parents. This is a volatile relationship with violence from both of them. Sally works cash in hand as a cleaner part-time with her mom. Keiran picks up work from the older men in the pub, though he is not considered reliable.

Robyn and Gary: - Robyn and Gary have a daughter **Makala** together born when they were both sixteen. Though they did at one stage have a flat on another estate, Robyn returned to live on the estate with her mom and dad. The relationship is extremely volatile with both being violent to the other. Robyn sometimes works cash in hand in a local café, and was part of the 'steal- to –order' group amongst some of the younger women. Gary did pick up work from the older men in the pub, and also worked as a runner for a drug dealer on another estate. Gary went to prison during the study, but since being released has gained primary custody of Makala.

Brenda and Coup: - One of the main couples in the bar and have been together since they were sixteen. They have five children who have all left home, and they now care for one of their grandsons **Little Coup**. Brenda is on the periphery of the group, but is well liked as she is always available to help out. Brenda works part-time in a care home. Coup has the reputation of being one of the best tilers in the business. They are both violent to each other and have cleared the room many times in the pub when they start fighting.

Pat and Bill: - Pat and Bill lived on the estate, though Bill died not long after the study started. Pat is a major part of the group but is usually overshadowed by her daughter Tina. Pat works full time as a housekeeper/cleaner.

Val and Wayne: - Both live on the estate and are occasional people in the pub. Val used to be a regular but when she left **Harry** due to extreme domestic violence she began to drink at a pub in the high street. Wayne works as a tiler and so is part of the work network in the pub.

Men:-

Paul:- Paul is from one of the biggest estate families. He worked doing drainage work for a small company owned by his brother, though had to retire as he nearly died having contracted legionnaire's disease at work. Paul's various relationships will be discussed later, though for the majority of the study he was with **Jackie**. Paul is one of the main domino players and central to what happens in the little lounge.

Harry: - Harry lives in a flat on the estate. Was married to **Val**, has a 'on-off' relationship with Breeda. Harry works as a block paver and is acknowledged as good at his job. Harry is known for being an abusive violent drunk, and although generally disliked is a major part of the work network.

Carl: - Carl drinks in the little lounge and is one of the domino players. His partner rarely comes to the pub. He works doing drainage work for a small company owned by one of the estate families. Carl is one of the people I am closest to in the pub.

Jack: - Jack is the widower of **Siobhan** and father to **Caitlyn** and **Aileen**. He owns his own house just up the road from the pub, but has been around the estate most of his life. Jack and I had a brief relationship. Jack drinks in the lounge and is one of the domino players and central to the pub group. He works in middle management in a factory in the city.

Mike: - Part of one of the estate families, lives on his own, the rent book passing to him when his parents died. Works as a mechanic. Drinks in the lounge and is one of the domino players.

Mark: - Part of an estate family, lives on his own. Works as a plumber and sometimes gets work through the job network. Mainly drinks in the lounge, is one of the domino players.

Finbar: - Lives on the estate with his partner **Sue** and her children who do not come into the pub often. Drinks in the bar and works as a block paver. He supplies work for some of the men in the pub.

Derek: - Derek is part of the estates biggest family and lives on his own on the estate. He does not work and is on disability allowance. Derek is considered one of the best pool players in the pub giving him the status missing from work identity.

Dan: - Dan lives on the estate with his mom who he is the full time carer for. Dan runs the betting book in the pub which is his main source of income.

Doc: - Doc moved to the estate thirty years ago. He lives on his own. Doc, although a Psychiatric nurse, works as a senior carer at a local day centre which is just about to close.

Steve: - Steve lives with **Pam** on the estate. Pam is sister to Celia and as they don't get on rarely drinks in the pub. Steve drinks in the bar and is a major part of the pub. Steve works in a local factory.

Bert: - Bert is Lewis' brother who frequently came to stay with Mary and Lewis when his wife threw him out of the house. He occasionally did labouring work for some of the men when they were desperate for 'hands' but was considered too unstable to employ regularly.

Para Pete: - Lives on the estate with his wife and three children. Pete drinks in the bar, he is also one of the one night stands used by the women. Pete works as a roofer.

Pat: - Pat rents a house up the road from the pub. He drinks mainly in the bar, but his children **Keira** and **Firdi** live with him on the weekends and the holidays when he drinks in the lounge and the kids join us. Pat is a brick layer who both gets work from and finds work for others in the pub.

Aaron: - Aaron lives on the estate, renting rooms to other men in the bar as needed. He is single and is another of the one night stands used by the women. Aaron mainly drinks in the bar, though when his son **Levi** comes to stay he drinks in the little lounge. Aaron is a plasterer who gets and finds work for others in the bar.

Chapter Four: Why Women Can't Play Dominoes: Femininity and the performance of gender

Introduction

Gender is socially, not biologically, determined. Regarding gender in the pub it is not just that gender is socially determined, but more importantly, it is how gender identities are created, enforced, maintained and upheld; how gender is prescribed and performed. I argue that the pub is a theatre for the performance of class and gender; this affords quite specific physical, linguistic, and emotional contexts, that the performances of class and gender are not only shaped by the places and the people involved, but also as argued in the previous chapter, they are shaped by previous experiences and interactions, drawn from stories told so that performance, as within theatre, and roles are largely prescriptive.

For the white working class women in the pub, gender performances are embodied performances including the clothes we wear, whether or not we wear makeup, our posture, movements and gestures are variable and change over time as one's personal style, is 'manifestation of the self we present to the world' and 'can hold a range of gendered meanings', (Eckert and McConnell-Ginet, 2003: 306). So through the modification of personal style, language, and embodied performance, an individual can modify their gendered performances. I am wary though of the term 'individuals' here as it may indicate a higher level of choice, of adoption and rejection of gender identity, than is actually available. It is not possible to examine the level of acceptance and rejection of gendered identity (leave aside the agency arguments inherent in this) without looking at how important prescription is in shaping available gender identities and performance. I argue against the neo-liberal formed individual who makes choices in gender identity and performativity as there are boundaries of perceived respectability and prescription both from within the class and outside that show different constraints. Yet there is a presumption of free choice, but as I argue,

in choosing from the available forms of gender, femininity dominates as the respectable ideal; femininity ties the women to a battle of what is perceived as respectable within the pub and from outside agencies.

Examining how respectability and individual choice affects the right to be recognised and protected by the state, Beverley Skeggs maintains that working class women may be excluded from this discourse of choice:

They do not have the requisite resources to enable them to become and to be seen to be “good responsible self-governing selves”. Respectability, therefore, becomes central to the production of the neo-liberal individual who can show that they have the right to belong, to be recognised (Skeggs 2004:12).

While agreeing with Skeggs (2004) that respectability can become the chosen route, my fieldwork shows that the rejection of the symbols of femininity is a form of resistance that women tactically operate in a highly gendered environment juggling appropriate gender identity. Here we have a double bind, the task of being an individual, of choosing, is shown through the rejection or acceptance of style of dress or making up, where the goal of acceptable respectable femininity is not achievable. As I discussed before, the construction of the doxa of identity for white working class women binds us to a representation of vulgarity and excess. It would then seem rational for the women in this study to adopt toned down feminine ‘garb’, particularly when interacting with the state, since all that the feminine image can offer here is the respectability with which it is associated.

The way the women experience, present, and live gender is to some extent a matter of personal choice but such choices, as gendered performances in the pub, are heavily influenced by received models of gender, both accepted and resisted and my fieldwork is a lived experience of this resisted embrace and rejection. Looking on as gender is performed, and taking part in the performances, exposes how gender identities are embraced or rejected. To take the performance element to a different level, gender identities are like costumes, worn, taken off and replaced as required.

This said we may make choices and embrace or reject certain aspects of gender identity but this is always restricted by the doxic, i.e. deeply sedimented presuppositions. As such there may be a kitchen full of food in a restaurant, but you are still restricted to the menu, and in the case of bodies restricted by to the metaphorical menu even further as Karen explains: 'I can't be arsed putting slap on and doing me roots, me tits are down by me belly anyway'.

Karen and others consider the symbols of femininity (make up, etc.) a waste of time due to changes in their body-shape post pregnancy. But this is not the complete story and should not be read as such. Resistance to the ideals of femininity are typically presented as a matter of personal choice, 'this is me'. But the question that has to be asked here is how individual is the individual? The social norms of class and gender are in constant operation intervening in interactions to make us easily identifiable to others as being of that class and that gender. There are objective limits to how much of an individual one can be. As Anne Cronin (2000) outlines; stating that the expressions and enactment of choice and the capacity of choosing, manifests as 'compulsory choice'. Individuality is not a real option, more a compulsory route to selfhood. For in choosing, one enacts and develops the self, and in developing the self for white working class women in the pub gender, femininity and sexuality are key. In the following sections I will discuss how we learn femininity, the complexity of femininity in gender performance, and then explore the playing of traditional pub games as an exemplar of gender appropriate and constructed identities within the pub; thus why women can't play dominoes.

The theatre of class and gender: Dress sense

Dress is the primary signifier of femininity, closely followed by hair. The issue of femininity for the group comes to a sharp point with the way girls are dressed. With the exception of two of the girls in the group, one being my daughter, the girls in the group are usually dressed in skirts or dresses. If jeans are worn they are invariably

embroidered with flowers or butterflies, that is, they are feminine jeans as opposed to plain jeans, which are seen as male by default.

The stages of girl clothing are interesting, mirroring the perceptions of appropriate femininity. Girl children in the group are dressed predominately in overtly 'girly' clothes - dresses/skirts, pink, frills or flowers, cartoon characters - until about seven or eight years of age¹². In the case of the women who are predominately 'feminine' dressers, the next stage of clothes will mirror the mother's taste, although a point to note is that clothes bought by grandmothers reflect the ideals of the grandmother, but these are not usually that different. For the grandmother to differ too far from the mother causes problems as will be discussed later. So, from the ages of about eight upward, to when the girl starts to buy clothes with friends (about thirteen/fourteen years old), girls begin to be dressed in faux- feminine/sexual clothes, for example belly-tops, shorter skirts and higher heeled boots or shoes.

Hair is always kept long for as long as possible, though this is a constant source of problems due to head lice/nits being endemic in schools. The problem of nits is more easily dealt with for boys as their hair is just kept very short, shaved to a number three or two, but long hair is symbolic of femininity for younger working class girls. Clothes do not just signal femininity, they also become part of restricting what girls can do - controlling appropriate behaviour, learning to be quiet, clean and still.

Controlling of appropriate behaviour of play and clothes by the mother does not just occur when the girl reaches pre-pubescence. By the time girl enters the last year of junior school, as said, clothes will have become more adult, heels become higher on shoes, boots become longer in the leg as well as higher heeled. Until the age of eight there is usually little control of play and behaviour, play is allowed to be free and easy for boys and girls until this age. So some of the girls joined in with rough and tumble games, climbing trees playing football, whereas others preferred to sit and play with dolls or do colouring. Playing with dolls or colouring won the approval

¹² Watching the girls come out of the local primary schools during winter, every girl was wearing a hooded coat with fur around the hood, invariably pink.

of most of the adults, being considered to be 'girly' games and (more importantly) quiet. The girls who chose this form of play were more successful in getting money, crisps or sweets when the men from the lounge visited the children's room. The more boisterous of the girls could be successful in securing money or sweets if they played the right level of cheekiness - too cheeky and you are considered to be too precocious and needing to be put in your place, a lesson to be learned for adulthood for both approaches from the girls. An example being a young girl sitting with dad when he played dominoes, a situation tolerated as her mother had recently died. Her mistakes were to make comments on the game, and to keep coming back for money when it was given to make her go away. If she had sat and played quietly while they were playing she would have been tolerated for longer, as she did not she was encouraged to join her sibling and other children in the children's room, becoming the responsibility of the women in there, where she joined in the rough and tumble games with the boys.

Rough and tumble play amongst girls as said is allowed in younger girls but is brought under control for a couple of reasons, doing cart wheels, gambols, headstands and climbing trees is stopped as 'the men will see your knickers or your 'chuff'¹³'. I was talking with Mary one afternoon as one of her daughters was playing with my daughter doing cartwheels in the garden:

Mary: Stop it now Leah, Bob is there he'll see your chuff

Su: Ah leave them they're having fun at least they're quiet and not moaning for something

Mary: But Bob will see her chuff she's got to stop doing stuff like that now

Su: Let her wear some trousers then she can play

Mary: She'll get her dress dirty 'n ruined she'll look like a boy in trousers

¹³ Name used for vagina

Appropriateness of play is about learning to be feminine, in clothing that also makes you look like a girl and restricts certain forms of play. The male gaze is introduced to girls early, not only that it is not appropriate for men to see certain parts of your body, but that clothes convey femininity and therefore certain behaviour is also required. I always find it strange that even in young girls, knickers and breasts were never to be seen by men as they are considered sexual, but low cut tops and short skirts are seen as acceptable.

A couple of girls did not follow the dress and behaviour code closely, they preferred to wear jeans and continued to climb trees and use the monkey bars after the appropriate age. These girls openly talked about not wanting to play the 'cute' game in order to get money or sweets. While they were younger this was always explained as them being 'tomboys' and they would 'grow out of it'. As they grew, they continued to wear jeans, and though they did stop climbing they replaced climbing with reading books in the pub. They now had to negotiate a gender identity that was not 'girlie', this was done by recognising and emphasising how they were considered by the others, especially around reading being clever, an identity of being clever which allows them a level of androgyny.

Dysfunctional Femininity: an Essex Girl in the West Midlands?

All of the women that frequent the pub usually wear jeans, which are swapped on a regular basis according to weight gain/loss. But the lines are very clearly drawn as to what is expected and appropriate behaviour, and clothes are no exception. Dressing up, or 'getting dragged up', is saved for special occasions such as Christmas, birthdays and various pub parties. Special attention is paid to looking attractive for birthdays, especially if there is a party, and even more so, if the party is held away from the pub. When events are held in another venue, where the display is also for people outside of the pub group, more attention is paid to clothes and make-up, and more jewellery is worn. This is a wealth display. When people move away from the pub there is also more of a display of femininity/sexuality. An example was Steve's 50th birthday party held in a local working men's club. The majority of the people

from the pub went, all the women wore skirts or dresses, all wore make-up and jewellery (even me) and all of the men wore suits and ties. We were on display and we were making sure we looked good and would be respected by Steve and the people at the Working Men's Club for doing this, here the idea of excess is respectable, it may be read as 'too much' by others outside of the culture and can leave people open to derision. Excess of dress, of being 'too much', fit somewhat with Germaine Greer's controversial article; *Long live the Essex Girl*, (2001) which confronts the idea of working class women and excess head on, acknowledging that for some working class women excess is the point:

The Essex girl is tough, loud, vulgar and unashamed. Her hair is badly dyed not because she can't afford a hairdresser, but because she wants it to look brassy. Nobody makes her wear her ankle chain; she likes the message it sends. Nobody laughs harder at an Essex girl joke than she does: she is not ashamed to admit what she puts behind her ears to make her more attractive is her ankles. She is anarchy on stilts; when she and her mates descend upon Southend for a rave, even the bouncers grow pale. (Guardian. Monday 5th March 2001)

Meanwhile in *Class, Self, Culture* (2004), Skeggs takes a different approach, arguing that the general consensus is that working class women never quite get it right. Skeggs describes the working class trappings of femininity as being in excess, hair too big or over-worked, too much makeup, heels too high, skirts too short, just 'too'. Now this may be true of going out, especially amongst younger working class women, but the effort, cost and time needed for maintaining this level of femininity for older women is risky. Just as women cannot have true sexual equality in a society that has the word 'slag' in constant use, and also phrases such as 'mutton dressed as lamb' or 'tarty' which make the art of dressing 'feminine' age limited and leaves older working class women open to ridicule. What Greer describes as 'excess' is an image younger working class women embrace and toy with, but is not the only costume used. Women who are working class must learn to walk the tight rope of respectability and femininity.

The power of the costume on show for men is the sexuality illusion, for women it is the power of respectability - the white arms of social class. But, as Louise shows, this power can be illusory if it is neither recognised nor respected by the others.

Returning to Skeggs, she states: 'Femininity is known and judged and frequently misrecognised through historically classed positions that are premised on appearance being read as a value of personhood' (2001:298). I would turn this point around: femininity can, and often is, read as being inappropriate, i.e. that the person is trying 'too hard' or is 'showing off,' getting above themselves.

An example here is Sonja, who held a high status job with a large national corporation. Sonja used the pub as it was close to home and has a children's room. Although she integrated into the group her habit of constantly buying clothes from expensive shops, coupled with the fact that she was always made up and had her hair done, became a source of irritation to most of the women. In the case of Sonja, the make-up, the clothes the hair are not sufficient signifiers of femininity, it is too much, even for the women in the pub. Too much make-up, too flashy, too much money spent (Midlands women love a 'bargin'). If paying attention to the symbols of femininity creates femininity, then in this case it did not work.

Paying so much attention to her appearances put into high relief her lack of attention to her child. She could never achieve feminine status as she was viewed as sexually out of control, and more importantly she was viewed as a bad mother. Her money, private education, qualifications and 'good job' were of no value in this context, her education and qualifications had no cultural or social capital. The way that she was controlled and contained was through condemning her for her child's behaviour, ignoring her child, and her excessive drinking (which in fact was equal to some of the other women, but she became vulnerable to criticism due to the way she dressed). Although she presented herself as a flirt, she was not seen as a sexual threat, her clothes were seen as too sexy, she was viewed by the men as out of control, or to be precise, she was referred to as a 'pissed loud mouthed slut'. As one of the men said when she flirted with him 'I wouldn't shag you, not while I've got a

hole in my arse'. In trying to gain the respectable femininity of working classness through attention to her appearance, Sonja makes the mistake of excess, again it's 'too much' and she loses respect.

A good example of the problem of femininity clothes and appropriate gender performance is Louise's arrival and integration into pub life. Initially when Louise started coming into the pub she was welcomed by the group, she lived and was known on the estate. She worked at the local school as a playground supervisor and was known, if not liked, by most of the children. From the start, Louise showed little interest in spending time in the children's room as her children are grown. Conversations between her and the group of women were friendly but superficial. Louise never integrated into the group; she had no interest in integrating as her aim was to secure a relationship with Paul. Louise insisted on spending most of her time with 'her man' Paul, constantly hanging on his arm. She did start from a difficult position since Paul was living with one woman who did not use the pub often (as she did not trust the landlord and considered him a leech), but was well known to everyone and very well liked. Paul had also been involved in a long term affair with one of the bar staff, Shirley, which had recently ended.

Paul was also having an affair with another woman in a local pub, as well as 'getting it together' with Louise. One evening Paul was moving between rooms as this 'other woman' was in the bar and Louise (as she was the new woman) was in the lounge, and his partner was at home. This made a laughing stock of Louise from which she never regained face. Paul was known for being 'a dog', and if she had just had a fling with him this would have been acceptable within the pub. However, she wanted to make a permanent relationship with Paul, to separate him from his partner, to make him sexually exclusive to her, and so chose not to integrate with the other women, being openly aggressive to Shirley due to the previous relationship. She also made it clear that she did not trust any woman talking with Paul, presumably as she thought he would 'stray', which led to her being ostracised from the women. This of course did not affect the men. Her tenuous relationship with the men formed from her

interference with domino games, and worsened when Louise started public arguments with Dan 'the bookie'. In house gambling is common within most estate pubs, having someone who 'runs a book' on most sporting events but mostly on horse racing. Most of the men run bets with Dan, Paul would have bets at the bookmakers as well as bets with Dan. One Sunday afternoon, while Paul was playing dominos, Louise started to shout over to Dan at the bar that he ought to 'get a round in' as he had taken so much money from Paul that week. This caused an uncomfortable silence, broken when Dan replied that Paul had had a bad run that week 'choosing donkeys'. The problem here is not only that Louise is publicly starting an argument, in itself frowned upon, but not unusual, but that she is publicly making comment on how Paul spends money, making it known she knows how much money he has and spends and letting it be known she disagrees with his gambling. She was not only interfering in his affairs, she was causing him to lose face. Despite Paul telling her to 'leave it'.

She continued to shout at Dan about taking people's money. Shep intervened that it was Paul's money and he could spend it how he liked 'he grafts for it its nowt to do with you'. Louise became ostracised from the majority of the men, people refused to drink in the lounge, moving to the bar if she was there, and for the next few weeks even the domino players moved to the bar. As Carl stated; 'she's a right one she might kick off again. She's not right 'er'. As an event this was of particular interest to me. Paul was one of the main players of dominoes, was a well-established man in the group having been brought up on the estate, and had been drinking in the pub for over forty years. This situation was only resolved when Louise stopped coming to the pub at weekends for a few weeks, and when she returned she drank in the bar.

The focus of the derision was her -the men considered her as high maintenance, highly dyed hair 'lacquered like a crash helmet', her cystitis jeans,¹⁴ low cut tops and high heels. She was always heavily made up. Tina and Judith (also high maintenance women) rejected Louise's style of dress as 'too much', as 'tarty' and 'mutton dressed

¹⁴ Very tight fitting jeans

as lamb'. For Tina and Judith paying attention to hair, makeup and clothes gives them feminine respectability and power not over men but over other women. Louise, in their opinion, takes it too far, making an extreme of how they present themselves. The concern here is not just the excess in terms of costume, hair and make-up; 'teks 'er two hours to get ready in the mornin' even just to go to the Co-Op' (Paul) it is Louise's excess in terms of behaviour in the pub, her public interference in Paul's betting with Dan; a domestic issue not tolerated in pub life, in trying to control Paul's behaviour with other women she interferes in Paul's time with his mates. Through all of this behaviour, Louis is not showing respect to the gender divide in pub life, especially concerning Paul's role as one of the main domino players.

Women can't play dominoes

To reiterate, the pub is a traditional working class pub, predominantly used by people off the estate whose families have lived on the estate and drank in the pub for years. Obviously, things have changed over the years; women do now drink in the bar, for example, causing some of the men to fondly reminisce about the men only room which was lost when the bar was extended. The traditional pub feel is reinforced as traditional pub games are still played there. The games most commonly played are cards (including poker), darts, pool and dominos. Game-playing in the pub offers one of the best opportunities to observe sexual banter, but also to observe the role playing of gender divide, femininity, and sexuality.

Dart teams until recently were common in the area, and the pub had originally had a women's and a men's darts team. Mixed matches were played, but they became more common over time as the decline in people coming into the pub meant that there were not players to make up single sex teams. As with a lot of the original pub culture this change was also to do with the death of the older men over the research time. Darts is one of the games where advice is not given by men to women. Men do not interfere with women whilst a game is being played. With the availability of men to play decreasing, women were included into teams based on their skill and

relationships to men in the team. An explanation for this may be that there is a precedent in women's darts teams, making the leap into competing with men was easier as women's skill in darts playing was already acknowledged. An interesting exception to the gender divide in darts is the annual darts matches played on St. Patrick's Day and St. George's Day for the cup and the rose bowl respectively. Mixed teams are the norm, an unusual local instance of when ethnicity out-ranks gender.

Card games are played by nearly everyone in the pub, children play cards, and mixed groups of men and women play cards, but card games are not gender neutral. Card games are played in all the rooms in the pub and what is of interest is the change that occurred regarding poker playing. Originally poker was very much considered a male game and was predominately played in the bar. A poker tournament was introduced at around the same time as online poker and Texas hold-em poker became popular on the television. More women began to play poker, but only playing Texas hold-em poker. The games moved into the lounge to allow more women to play as the children could be in the children's room cared for by other women. An impact was also when a tournament was introduced, all you needed was to know how to play and a £5 stake to enter the game. Initially when poker moved to the lounge it was still common to hear men giving advice on how to play or what cards would be helpful. As soon as money was involved this stopped. As more women began to win the games the men's attitudes changed from 'allowing women to play' to introducing a league, so Poker games became more frequent, and a league ladder was introduced meaning that game times were pre-set and a sense of order and almost officialdom was introduced. The extending of the games was presented as a way of determining the better player over an extended period, but was seen by the women who played as a way for the men to save face:

Tina: God Pete how many times you want me to win you, I don't mind I'll keep taking the money

Peter: Yeah you just get lucky, poker is a skill game, time will tell

Tina: Yeah right bring it on big boy we'll see who's on top

Peter: You on top you'd crush me who's got a winch?

Tina: Fuck off

The rejection of the idea that Tina might be a better poker player than Peter is explained away by luck, skill is recognised as masculine, and although it is acceptable for women to play, it is seen as threatening for women to win at poker. Peter's comment refers to Tina's size, sexualising the conversation, Peter attempting to take control the interaction, by using sexuality and body size/shape to regain control, she might beat him at poker but he can attempt to control the situation by deriding her body size.

Pool playing is one of the most interesting examples of how gender is learned and practiced within the pub. There were pool tables in both the children's room and the bar. The table in the children's room being rather tatty, it was mainly used by women and children. As soon as children are tall enough to hold a small cue they begin to play pool, chairs being used for them to stand on when they are too small to see over the table. Boys and girls both play pool, as the boys get older arguments begin as the boys no longer want to play against girls as they see playing against another boy as not only more appropriate, but more of a challenge.

Ben: I aint playing her she don't even hold the cue right

Tracey: Just shut up and play

Ben: I don't wanna play 'er she cheats

Tracey: She didn't cheat she just won ya

Ben: No she didn't she cheated she took two shots on the black

Accusations of cheating by boys against the girls if the girl is winning are the norm. The gender divide of losing face by being seen to be beaten by a girl starts about the age of eight. As will be discussed later, eight is the age where gender differences become more enforced and displayed. Pool is often played between couples and it is common for men to challenge the women to play pool. At one point in the research I had a partner who was a regular at the pub. When my partner and I played pool,

someone would usually shout 'OK Jack you gonna give her another wallop over the pool table' and 'Give 'er one for me while ya there, you show 'er''. Playing pool in the bar is complicated by the difference in gender appropriateness and expectations in gendered behaviour.

Where this is best seen is watching some of the women playing pool against a man they have recently started a relationship with. When Louise was 'getting it together' (her phrase) with Paul, they moved from drinking in the little lounge (where he mainly played dominos, which she was not allowed to play) to drinking in the bar pool room. As both of them did not have young children this was a usual transition of drinking in the lounge when you are first 'courting' to drinking in the bar when the relationship is established. The slightly better decor, comfort and higher drinks prices of the lounge being appropriate for the early stages of a relationship, showing extra attention, replaced by the daily drinking routine as part of the relationship in the bar. Having become a bar resident Louise became part of the pool game between couples display. Louise constantly pointed out that she could not play properly, and Paul would respond by helping her hold the cue, holding her around the waist thus restricting her movement, and showing her where to hit the ball. After a few weeks all of the women in the room began to make comments at Louise, about not being such a girl, as it was considered that she was 'messing about' to get his attention. When a game is played between a man and a woman it is common for the man to 'advise' the woman on where to hit the ball, or to point to where on the cushion to aim to hit the white, or to pot. Typically, the man moves to standing behind the woman positioning her hips and arms. Some of the women reject this, except if it is at the start of a relationship when this level of touching is encouraged. Generally, most of the men give a running commentary on the way the woman is playing - 'I would have put that red over the pocket,' or 'you hit that too hard' -which is missing from the matches played between men, interfering and generally making sure that a greater knowledge of pool is seen as male even when the woman wins the game.

Interference with women when playing pool is usual, comments are made about shape and size of bums, shape and size of breasts, or women are heckled when bending over the table to take a shot, 'stay there a minute while I give you a quickie' or 'stay there I can see right down your tits'. The changing of body shape needed to play pool makes women particularly vulnerable to this. Squatting or bending down to put money in the table, or to bring the balls out of the table to set up (something Louise always refuses to do) means you are open to jokes such as 'while you're down there love' accompanied by pretend unzipping of trousers. Sexual humour and banter is partly used to try to undermine women playing, but in truth has little or no effect. It is a way of signalling to the other men watching that this is a bit of fun, not a real game. Making jokes and sexual comments is part of the banter of pool playing, again a way of controlling what is still considered to be a mainly male game in a male dominated room. An example being one afternoon I was playing pool against Doc, and winning. He played a shot badly and the men in the room laughed at him saying that I was in danger of giving him a brushing¹⁵. He responded by saying he couldn't concentrate properly as he had a 'stiffy, 'er with 'er arse in the air over the table is putting me off, I'm gonna 'ave to give 'er one in a minute', to which I replied 'yeah you'll have to get a box to stand on though wont ya?' As I am taller than a lot of the men in the pub drawing reference to this was a preferred 'put down', drawing attention to being taller slightly, but only slightly, undermines their masculinity.

The best example of gender divide in games in the pub, however, is dominos. Dominos is one of the games where women do not 'interfere'. Women are not only barred from playing dominoes, their close proximity to a game is not appreciated either. To return to Louise and Paul, Louise would sit and hold onto his arm while he played, the other men complained about this as she was putting them off. They began to openly make jokes about 'love's young dream', and their irritation at her intrusion was made very obvious. Paul tried to encourage Louise to go into the children's room, or gave her money to play the machine (as if she was a little girl) but

¹⁵ Winning the game when the opponent has not potted any of their balls.

she would not go. The argument was resolved by Paul and Louise making the transition to drinking in the bar and playing pool, and him playing dominoes when she was not there. The men began to deride Paul, as letting his domino partner down and a certain amount of juggling had to take place in pairs so games could be played. They began saying he was under the thumb and why was he letting Louise control him, to which he replied, 'well at least I'm getting my leg over every night, when was the last time you got it wet?' In time Louise moved to another set of tables when Paul was playing dominoes, and the situation was resolved.

Dominos is considered a highly skilled game with set patterns of tiles to be played according to what you and your partner hold in your hand. The relationship that develops between the partners is determined by their ability to know the appropriate tile to play and to understand their partner's style, allowing them to block their opponents and play their tiles out. Being able to predict your partner's and opponent's play is the skill of the game. Women are considered to play too slowly, and to not follow the rules of the game i.e. they consider that women make illogical moves which ruin the game. A more convincing reason that women do not play dominoes is that the women and the men have different calls on their time and responsibilities. For the most part, the women who frequent the pub historically could not form stable pairs, this is considered by the men to be an absolute prerequisite for a proper game of 5's and 3's. Dominoes has always been played on a Saturday and Sunday afternoon, traditionally times when women's visits to the pub were brief due to domestic commitments. This does not mean that the same women, in friendship groups are not there at the same time frequently, they are. The difference is there are calls on women's time while in the pub from children. The gender divide here is that women are not welcome to play as they play irrationally. Playing dominoes, in the terms of the men involved is an example of habitus - learnt and persisting schemes of perception, thought and action - it is a "feel for the game", a "knowing how rather than knowing that", in which the embodied self always bears the marks of the starting point and the ground covered along the way

(Skeggs 2001:4). So the contention that 'women can't play dominoes' is part of these men's doxa.

Conclusion

The argument here is that gender divide in the pub creates a life for working class women in the margins (not playing dominoes), then the fluidity of identity that is presented to us in postmodernist arguments allow for the subversion of patriarchal identity restrictions. There is a given presumption that gender identity is always embraced, conceded to, and taken as a given, whereas Jacqueline Rose argues that gender and in particular, femininity, is always deeply problematic, a status that is never fully and wholeheartedly embraced, always resisted. (Rose 1993).

That women should not interfere in the dominoes (because they can't play as they are irrational) is part of a wider issue concerning working class women, gender roles are context specific and must be gauged carefully. It is possible to move from one role to another, though this can be if not dangerous, at least risky. For instance, the move from being a protected young virginal girl, to someone who is recognised as a respectable heterosexual sexual woman is problematic. Gauging the level of independence and co-dependence as the young women form heterosexual relationships demands skill in presenting yourself as an attractive sexual girlfriend, exclusive to 'your man' while visible as attractive to other men and importantly one who knows when to disappear. Respectability for them, through femininity, is not readily achievable. The production of femininity and respectability is located in appropriate gender performance, and perhaps more importantly in the care and rearing of children, keeping a good home and the ability to keep a heterosexual relationship. The heterosexual relationship is of course clearly defined in it's mythology of appropriate roles and gender identities which include masculinity, as with other areas of working class life the role of masculinity appears exaggerated which will be explored next.

Chapter Five: 'Best Block Paver in the Business': Masculinity

Introduction

Historical constructions of gender obviously affect men as well as women; it is a moot comment but does bear some thinking about, especially when considering representations of white working class men's lives. The presupposition of white working men is also of 'too much'. Their identities are formed in patriarchal ideologies and performances of hyper-masculinity, they are 'too' male. White working class men are also presented as benefiting from the creation of working class women as 'other', that the division of gender in the working class benefits the working class man, with white working class women's lives seen as separate to the mainstream lives of white working men. To some extent this true, but the separation of men and women's lives is a direct result of historical and economic constructions of gender and class as roles and narrated identities.

Placing a sociological lens on the active relationship between class and gender we seem to identify and create problems, and yet somehow miss the point focusing traditionally on patriarchy and power. Theoretical standpoints have rightly emphasised the very real impact of patriarchy, and I am certainly not denying the impact of patriarchy in the narrative identities or gender performance/roles in the pub, but focusing on the evident has a tendency to miss the complexity of gender relations between working class women and men, creating theoretical standpoints that leave people mute and constrained rather than social actors in their gender identities.

Concerning patriarchy, Haywood & Mac an Ghail (2003) draw on Hearn's (1992) work concerned with a more complex approach to patriarchy, arguing that an overarching argument of male power or domination does not address the differing or 'multidimensional' aspects of 'power, '

Relations are multidimensional and differently experienced and responded to within specific historical contexts and social locations...differentiated forms of male power can only be explained by an analysis which takes into consideration the specific conditions that give rise to these situations. It is the relationship between these social structures that determines how gender relations are *lived out*" [my emphasis] (Haywood & Mac an Ghail, 2003: 8)

Usefully, Hearn's analysis asserts that the power relationship between men and women could be viewed as sexual classes, 'structurally located within the relationships of patriarchy and capitalism.' (1992: 9) Structural relationships of power, using the structure and superstructure model, construct masculinity as the 'structured ideology of males...while men persist in the base of reproduction, masculinities persist in the "ideology" of production'. (Hearn 1987. 98) So, for Hearn, the economic shared structural location of men gives men 'collective masculinity' (Haywood, Mac an Ghail. 2003. 9). As I am challenging hegemony in class and gender for women, this must be true for the men in the pub as well. To return to the performative nature of gender, Connell (1995) argues, drawing on Gramsci's (1971) use of hegemony, to describe gender in society so that masculinity is 'not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships' (1995: 81). So working class hypermasculinity (that of the macho) is an example of a specific form of patriarchy enacted as a result of historical constructions of divisions of labour resulting in what we perceive and create as macho working class hyper masculinity.

My task though is not arguing the existence or role of patriarchy in the relationships and interactions in the pub - this can be taken as read; what I do want to examine is the structuring, acceptance and perhaps rejection of generalised masculine identities in the pub. Sitting watching and, more importantly, listening to men in the pub there are differing performances of gender, and over the time of the study, narratives of the men change. As Connell (1995) argues, drawing on Gramsci's (1971) discussion on hegemony to describe gender in society, masculinity is 'not fixed character types but configurations of practice generated in particular situations in a changing structure of relationships'. (1995: 81)

For this reason, I have threaded femininity and masculinity through chapters concerning childhood, sexuality and violence, as it would have been impossible to write separate chapters concerning construction of feminine and masculine gender identities as these are learned and acted out alongside and in juxtaposition to each other. We learn and act out our gender identities in the complex arena of the pub, influenced by the macro structures, but we learn what it is to be girls and boys, what is expected and accepted of us in such roles, and what will be expected from us as adults. But a chapter that focuses specifically on some of the theoretical constructions of white working class male identity is needed. To this end, in this chapter, I will discuss the changes in masculine identity through changes in work for the men in the pub, focus on the construction of the hypermasculine identity of white working class men in relation to promoting hypermasculinity to other men in the pub, and relate this to specific changes in work, being 'too' male, and, to provide a balance (as these instances do not occur in a male only vacuum), I will give examples of instances where women become involved in certain events.

Work, dirty hands and identity

Both men and women work. For women working is definitely part of self-respect and, more importantly, financial necessity; the difference is that women move in and out of work due to children and relationships. Men work. Work is identity, status and pride. Work gives men access to more than money, it gives them status, standing and, importantly, access to social, cultural and economic capital. The imagery of the working class man being the provider is a reality for the men of the pub. Walkerdine (2001:54) clearly identifies the staying power of the masculinisation of class that still permeates theoretical and cultural approaches to class:

the idea that social class is an overwhelmingly masculine category has shown a particularly vigorous tenacity...feminist critics have powerfully challenged this privileging of the labour market as the main site in which individuals come to understand themselves as class subjects.

It is not only class that has an overwhelming masculine identity, work does too, as discussed in the chapter on class, separating class from work is difficult, as is the same with white working class masculinity. At the start of the research, a high proportion of the men worked at a major car manufacturer on the production lines, some worked at a major food manufacturer, or were involved in various aspects of the building trade and road and drainage work. Now the majority of the men work in building or road/drainage work with about half of them working on zero hours contracts or cash in hand. Of the cash in hand group, there are those who are the 'disappeared' - those men who do not claim any benefits, pay tax or national Insurance. Having been made redundant, their work situation continues to be tenuous so working cash in hand makes them less vulnerable to times without money while benefits claims are sorted.¹⁶ The importance of manual work, getting your hands dirty, is central to the identity of the men in the pub and the distinction between manual and non-manual work gives men cultural and social capital within the pub - work is central to masculinity and cultural/social capital.

The time over which the fieldwork took place saw dramatic changes in the pub, redundancies and subsequent closure of the large car manufacturing plant had had a tremendous impact on work available in the area, as later did redundancies at the major food manufacturer. The ripple effect of the loss of a major manufacturer in the area affected nearly all of the people in the pub, the men more so than the women. For those men on the estate whose identities were firmly fixed to a work identity that collapsed around them with the manufacturing industry, re-invention of themselves can be observed through structural re-adjustment and having to find other work in a depleted job market. There was some tension between the men who had taken redundancy in earlier rounds of cuts at the car plant before its closure in 2006, there was an anger that the plant had finally gone, and that for those who had left earlier they had been proved right to leave. The group that left in the earlier

¹⁶ Many of the women, myself included, had problems with bailiffs due to claims for council Tax benefit not being processed quickly enough and non-payment charges being sent to court.

cuts had found work with men in the pub, predominantly in building or road working, and with some working for a drainage company owned by a pub regular.

It had been common for men to move in and out of work at the car plant, since many hated the repetitive and 'soul destroying' nature of working on the line, and some did not like working shifts. Often the comradery of working with mates did not compensate for having to work for a 'dip shit team leader 'oo couldn't do the job if 'e tried', (Neil). But knowing people who worked there meant that you could return when you needed the sort of money that could be earned working at 'the plant'. The final closure meant an end of a way of working, of opportunities to work and that options in the area were gone. This also meant that less work was available for the younger men in the pub, as priority in casual work was given to those men seen to be 'out of work' as opposed to looking to pick up some work. Inevitably less work was available over time and the situation was that around half of the men were unemployed at any given time.

Special Department of Social Security staff were put into centres at the site of the former car manufacturing plant, as well as some of the surrounding estates (most of which already had a high unemployment rate), to advise redundant workers about job seeking and benefits. This in turn caused problems, as most of the men lived with, or were married to, women who worked and so were not entitled to benefits. Core to their identity was that of the 'worker' and the 'provider', so to be denied income as their partners work was a hurtful blow to their status. The advice of many of the women who had experience of 'working' the benefits system was to make a claim without acknowledging their partner. This raised a few interesting issues in terms of male working class identity. Giving over the status of provider seriously affected the way the men interacted with each other in the pub. It was well known that many of the women had, or were, claiming benefits even though they were at times living with someone. Firstly, for the men to make a claim for benefits without declaring their partners would put them on the same footing as the benefit dependent women in the children's room. Secondly, to declare their children on the

form would indicate them as single parents which would attract the attention of the Benefits Agency. The only alternative was that which they were advised by the women, to declare themselves as single in order to get minimum benefits, which was 'better than nothing, give you a bit of money' (Karen), and, as was pointed out, 'the bastards are going to be drowning in claims, most of 'em are gonna get rubber stamped' (Jane). The fact that the women had a greater knowledge of the benefits system reflected the economic reality of this group, and I would presume many working class women, evidencing one of the gender divides.

The closure of the car plant saw the end of a way living and thinking for the majority of people in the pub, especially the men. To work at the plant was a job for life, the principle of a job for life is significant, to work is to be a man. To provide, to be seen to working/providing, is what gives you stature with other men. To have money in your pocket, to stand a round of drinks, to join in the work woes conversations, to join in with the 'they don't know what they're doing' discussions, is part of constructing and maintaining male pub identity. For a man not to be working diminishes his standing and identity. Charlesworth (1999: 79), talking of his interviews with one unemployed person (we can reasonably presume he means man):

Their world has lost significance, in that they can no longer experience the investment of being absorbed in what we call a "meaningful context"; and in this situation of withdrawal, it is as if the world now stands out for them as a series of practices that they are exempted from. The world has become occurrent for them.

Drawing on Heidegger's concept of Dasein, linking the economic role and the essence, existence of the man in the interview, Charlesworth goes on to reinforce his assertion of men coming into:

[a] position in which everyday forms of motility and absorption are curtailed, every-day and the world as it was formerly lived fall into an unsettledness through which it becomes possible to experience oneself as worthless and meaningless, *one is in the world but unable to secure meaning from the*

network of patterns of practices around one. [My emphasis] (Charlesworth: 80)

This is where the idea of the active constructing and living of identity becomes confusing. Yes, for the men in the study, becoming unemployed excludes them, not only financially, but more importantly it excludes them from the practice of some forms of masculinity in the pub, if we are maintaining the argument that economic production is crucial to the production of masculinity. If being masculine is to produce, then 'Being is being in, it is belonging to and being possessed, in short participating, taking part' (Bourdieu. 1984. 1) So it is a larger project. Yes, unemployment effects drastically the men's lives and I am not in any way undervaluing the stress, anxiety and depression that comes with unemployment, but masculinity changes in this space in such a way that any change becomes subsumed into the way the masculine is acted out.

There were many social changes that can be seen to affect the way men in the pub view themselves and generally in society there have been many changes in the wider social collective self-representation of what it is to be a white working class man. For example, a small but interesting point concerning changes in discussions between the men was the start of new conversations about food. If we consider the almost national obsession with cookery programmes and the reported increase in men cooking, at the beginning of the study this would have only been discussed in the pub as said by Carl, 'that Jammie Oliver is a fucking southern puff'. Yet cooking did become part of discourses amongst men affected by changes in their economic realities.

Along with clothes, food is always a good indicator of class. Mainly food (buying and cooking of food) was/is a woman's concern, though there is an exception in terms of buying meat, where, especially for the Sunday dinner, about half of the men were responsible for buying a joint of meat. The single men mainly live off chip shop and take away, and, in the case of Mike (who mainly eats chip shop), his sister also delivers him meals, including his Sunday dinner (Mike's sister also does his shopping,

washing and cleaning). The types of meals eaten was also divided between those who are big fans of a curry - 'the hotter the better, put the bog roll in the fridge' (Mark) - to those who don't eat 'foreign muck':

Carl: 'er brought 'ome some of that pasta I aint eating that foreign muck

Su: it's pasta what's wrong with pasta everybody eats pasta

Carl: I don't know what's wrong with taters that's what we're supposed to eat it's good enough for me.

Yet a year later Carl was unemployed, and so began to 'do' his own food in the day, as his partner was at work. Getting fed up with sandwiches he started to look for quick alternatives and found pasta. Having asked how to cook pasta, a conversation started about different sauces he could try with it. At the next Sunday's domino match Mark asked me to bring him in some herbs as he was going to cook in the week and wanted to try doing the whole meal from scratch. A new swapping of cooking information started between the group about what they had tried and what they wanted to have 'a go at'. In itself, this may not seem much, but this change from the worker who never went near the kitchen except to make butties for work, to boasting of the ability to make Yorkshire puddings is highly significant. This is a soft change yet somehow more significant because of the nature of the exchange of information, the promotion of skills in cooking, a new form of exchange alongside the usual banter about carburettors, pipe laying and bets, but this has not meant that work is no longer the predominant presentation of masculinity in the pub for as Goffman (1976: 69) states: 'If gender be defined as the culturally defined correlates of sex (whether in consequence of biology or learning), then gender display refers to conventionalised portrayals of these correlates'.

There may be a change in some of the gender display for the men but the in the habitus of male white working class the correlates of male are defined through work. Talking with Finbar one day, Harry was at the bar, obviously drunk and being obnoxious to the bar staff. We were talking about Harry and his reputation for being a drunk's drunk:

Su: I was in the [REDACTED] the other day with Sheila when Val [Harry's ex] came in, he was pissed as usual he was just about to start at 'er when Dylan came in, 'e soon shut up

Finbar: Didn't know Val was with Dylan

Su: Yeah ages now, never thought she'd get with anyone after the shit she took from Harry the woman was a walking punch bag

Finbar: Best block paver in the business though worked with 'im loads of times he lays more blocks an hour than anyone I know, edging curb as well.

A man's skill and ability to work is still the defining identity within masculinity - 'Best block paver in the business'. My relationship with Harry is not only that he is a drunk's drunk, he is violent, to be avoided. I talk to him but keep a distance; for Finbar this is overshadowed by his block laying skills. This gender divide in our interpretation of Harry, I think, encapsulates certain aspects of gender identities in the pub which will be discussed in the following sections.

Hypermasculinity: being 'too much'.

In the pub just as we 'do' class, we 'do' gender. Identities are not just the making of the individuals, they are historically, socially and culturally constructed, and as with class the perception of the working class man is often problematic. In common with working class women who are too much (too much hair and make-up), working class boys, and men, are seen 'as having too much masculinity', (Mac an Ghail & Haywood. 2003. 8). But what does that mean, 'too much masculinity'? If, as West and Zimmerman (1987) state, gender is both emergent of social situations as 'an outcome of and a rationale for various social arrangements and as a means of legitimating of the most fundamental division in society' (1987:131), what is happening in these situations that produces too much masculinity? Is it that working class men's performance of masculinity is read as too much, or the division of class that proceeds the division of gender (or race or sexuality) inevitably creates an

'other' form of masculinity, one that is too much, that is too marked against; a form of hyper-masculinity. Reading studies of working class masculinity I was often left wondering if we were talking about the same people. Pyke's (1996) classic work *Class Based Masculinities* 'centres on how the relational construction of ascendant and subordinated masculinities provide men with different modes of interpersonal power that, when exercised, (re)construct and reaffirm interclass male dominance.' (1996:527) Pyke's work, though focusing on interpersonal power, argues that lower-class men who ostentatiously pursue drugs, alcohol, and sexual carousing are constructing a compensatory form of masculinity i.e. they are compensating for their inferior status vis-à-vis other men. Such men wear their behaviour like a badge, a badge of masculinity at work and other social environments they inhabit. By drinking with other working-class men at the bar and openly engaging in extramarital relationships, they appear to be defying existing power structures, displaying their independence from the control of their wives and 'the establishment' (i.e., higher-status men). Such exaggerated masculinity it is argued, compensates these men for their subordinated status in the hierarchy of their everyday work. It is said to give them a sense of autonomy and is self-gratifying, entitlements that higher-status men acquire more easily and with greater security, thereby creating the illusion of ascendant masculinity. This then may be the answer to the question of what is 'too masculine', a form of hypermasculinity (Mosher and Sirkin 1984) that asserts white working class men as sexually promiscuous, drunk and/or drugged and above all violent; an identity which white working class men embrace.

Regarding a possible creation of 'hypermasculinity' for the people I have studied - predominantly construction workers, road workers, or men who work in industry - the gulf between them and 'higher status men' (i.e. their senior managers) hardly matters to them, as they would say that since there is very little contact between them. Bosses are assigned to the a separate world of work as 'wankers' or 'puffs' who know little to nothing of *how* to do which ever job and would be incapable of the skill or strength. Masculinity for the men in my study is about working hard, earning money, being one of the boys, providing, keeping your woman happy,

looking after your kids (if you decide to) of having 'dirty hands' symbolic of your ability to work, to provide, to be male. Meeting with friends for a drink, the occasional playing away. 'Cutting loose' is seen as a right, compensation for the hard work they do in order to 'provide'. As will be discussed later, for the majority of the women this is taken for granted and there is no issue. So long as the household is provided for, the majority of what the men do is ignored, condoned or even encouraged. It also does beg the question, if lower class (status) men define lower class women as passive and dependent (according to Pyke), choosing to spend time with other men and have affairs, why do higher class men do the same? In asserting ideas of hypermasculinity Pyke also fails to recognise the power that lower class women have in these situations, and, who are these lower class men having affairs with? Or is Pyke saying that white working class women are passive and do not choose to have sex with these men? ¹⁷ This is more complicated and will be discussed further in the chapter on sexuality.

Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2003) continue to argue that a range of masculinities are produced through life histories involving peer groups, family background and other social experiences. So, the pub is a stage for certain performances of gender (or in this case masculinities) but these are informed from a wider set of arenas. And this is where the challenge for boy children in the pub starts: Adam (nearly 3 at the time) was one of the younger boys in the children's room, coming in with his Mom and Dad, Bob and Kerry, who would play the machine in the lounge. Adam would play with the toy kitchen and food, using the shopping trolley to pretend shop and ignoring the toy trucks, cars and trains that were available. Bob would come in take the toys off him amid much screaming and tell him he was not a girl. Talking with Bob about this at the bar, after one screaming match, Bob explained it was a

¹⁷ A discussion in the bar at a conference turned to university staffs' support of the miner's strikes to which someone complained that they had got fed up with inviting striking miner's to address support rallies since they usually resulted in the miners bedding women after the rally, to which I replied 'did you invite a miner's wife'?

problem as Adam even had a toy Hoover at his Nan's to stop him playing with the real one.

Su: So what I'd encourage 'im start 'em young looking after things 'elping out

Bob: It aint right e aint a girl

Su: It don't matter 'es just playin

Sheila: Perhaps 'e might play with the boy's things if your Kerry came in 'ere more instead of feeding the fuckin' machine your lecci money

Bob: fuck off Sheila they'll think 'es a puff

Su: Who'll think 'es a puff?

Bob: Don't start everyone will think 'es a puff 'e needs to be outside playing with the other boys

Sheila: Piss off 'es a babee get your Kerry to take 'im outside to play with the other boys.

This as a narrative interaction about gender appropriate play could be viewed as supporting Adam's choice of toys and in part it is, but with proviso; Adam is still seen as young enough by most of the women not to worry about toy and game choice, Adam is an only child, does not go to nursery and so doesn't have other boys with whom to play and learn gender appropriate games. But it is also an attack on Kerry for not spending enough time in the children's room, regardless of the money in the machine. The joke in the group was that Kerry had post-natal disinterest. What is important though is Adam is young enough not to worry too much about not being a 'proper' boy.

My experience of the pub is that people have a higher level of agency concerning white working class gender performance and identity than Pyke acknowledges. But we return to the point that to the outside observer, in this case white working class men are 'too...' This though does not mean that others around them are passive that

these identities are not recognised or challenged, a point that Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2003: 10) also describe:

Men occupying a hegemonic masculinity are asserting a position of superiority. They do this by 'winning the consent' of other males and females, in order to secure their (hegemonic) legitimacy. Men are able to position other men by way of their subordinated, complicit, or marginalised relationships.

An example of Haywood and Mac an Ghail's theory of hegemonic masculinity can be seen in an instance that took place at a Halloween party. It should be remembered that parties are the best place to observe gendered practice and performance as people dress up for events and tend to stay together as couples throughout the event. At the Halloween party everyone was moving between the children's room and the little lounge. Shep was chasing Dave round with a pumpkin man figurine trying to hit him and destroying the figurine in the process. Everyone is laughing and cheering Shep on. Shep is a foot taller and twice the girth of Dave. When the figurine is destroyed he picks Dave up and starts swinging him round, to the cheers of everyone including Dave's wife. The next day's discussion of the night before centres on Dave's bruises:

Dave: [Laughing] thought he was gonna kill me

Finbar: Could be worse he could 'ave been upset with ya least he was avin a laff

Dave: [laughing] Thought I was gonna end up like that bloody pumpkin man

Finbar: you don't get any work off 'im anyhow so why didn't ya tell 'im to fuck off?

Dave: Yeah good one he was pissed won' 'e, could 'ave fuckin killed me

Finbar: [laughing] 'ave a word with when he comes in you tell 'im go on try

Dave: It was only a laff, don't matter does it.

Dave cannot say or do anything about this situation. This may be about asserting dominant masculinity between men as is described in the discussion - Dave will lose face to complain to Shep. It is not just that Dave is physically incapable of challenging Shep, he would lose face to be seen to do that. In making it into a joke he can affirm his masculinity that he could take a joke, it was just a bit of messing about. The only way he can reassert his own masculinity in this situation is to be seen to be 'big enough' to take the joke, "ave a laff'. He does not secure any work from Shep, they never work together, so he is not just putting up with the violence to keep work, rough play is part of being a man in that situation, asserting a position of male superiority amongst other men who prescribe to hypermasculinity, but a hypermasculinity that can be challenged; an example being the relationship between Coop and Mark. Coop is the best friend of Shep, has the reputation of one of the best tilers in the business, gets freelance work easily but also has problems in work places as he 'talks with his fists'. Well known for starting fights and being a 'bit of a bully', especially to his wife Brenda, it was usually left to Shep to calm him down. One Saturday afternoon Coop was jibbing and shouting at Derek about the football on the television, they supported different but local teams. Coup began to get more physical pushing Derek's arm when he went to pick his pint up. Derek is not employed, small though aggressive, but gains reputation by being one of the best pool players in the pub. Mark comes into the bar and sees what's going on:

Mark: You're just a wanker aren't ya

Coup: [laughing] Wot?

Mark: You you're just a wanker

Coup: Who said anything to you?

Mark: You're a bully and a wanker 'es a streak of piss, he can't 'it ya, yer just a bully

Shep: Leave it Mark

Mark: You've always been a bully, and you still are. I 'ate bullies, get away with it cos no one stands up to 'em

Coup: Fuck off I'm only 'avin a laff

Mark: Does he look like 'es laffin? Yer bully

Coup: Fuck off whats it to do with you

Shep: Alright

Mark: You cos you're a bully now fuck off

The usual banter between fans of rival teams escalated as Coup was set on humiliating Derek, knowing he could not retaliate, and relying on the backing of Shep meant he thought no one would interfere with his performance. There is a line in the havin' a laff and the rough and tumble of 'men together' that is learned during the 'boys will be boys stage'. All of the men involved in the discussion (obviously not Derek) were known to have a 'tough' reputation, known to be able to 'handle themselves'. However, Coup is known for making unnecessary fights, fights that are only to prove to himself and those around that he is a hard man, so following the point of hegemonic legitimacy his performance of masculinity is challenged as Mark has a history of violence, is a 'hard man', which Coup knows as they were at school together. And so, Coup is not able to continue to exploit his hard man performance against Derek and is shown to be a bully. In asserting a form of dominant masculinity through violence Coup required the consent of the others in the bar, which considering he had chosen Derek for his display of aggressive superiority was not given. The code of rough and tumble, boys being boys, does not include bullying.

Haywood and Mac an Ghail (2003) continue to argue that a range of masculinities are produced through life histories involving peer groups, family back ground and other social experiences, so the pub is a stage for certain performances of masculinities but these are informed from a wider set of arenas but also it does not mean that these performances go unchallenged or are just accepted and legitimised. A common happening of identifying and learning to incorporate and, if not

legitimise, work with presented ideologies of masculinity is Keiran and Lyndsey. Both in their late teens they had been going out for about six months, Lyndsey came to the pub and went in the bar as she knew that Keiran was in there. Keiran told Lyndsey to go away as he was with his mates so she came into the lounge to join us:

Tina: There's no point in crying he's a prat you know he's a prat

Lyndsey: But he's not like that when he's with me when it's just me an 'im

Su: None of 'em are

Tina: All loving and gentle like bit romantic?

Su: 'es not like 'is mates?

Tina: all loving, soft velvet voice and smiles?

Su: Not telling ya to piss off cos 'es with is mates?

Lyndsey: But that's it 'es only like this when 'es with is mates 'es showing off being the big man

Tina: 'eel text ya later all sorry wanting to meet up tell 'im to piss off and grow up.

The separation of women and men in the pub can be read as legitimising hegemonic masculinity. It is certainly true that traditionally it was frowned upon for women to be in the bar due to swearing and a potential of violence (some of the men still mourn the loss of the men only room), but the example given of Keiran and Lyndsey is an example of negotiating the separation of women and men's lives in the pub. Lyndsey's perception being that she had spent time getting ready for a night out with her boyfriend in the bar, his that he had been at work most of the day had come in to join his mates for a few pints post work, watched the horse racing, the football results, played a few games of pool and was generally enjoying his time in the male conserve of Saturday afternoon drinking in the bar; of which Lyndsey was no part. The blunt responses we gave to Lyndsey reflect the experience of negotiating gender roles within relationships for women in the pub. The

romanticised ideology of couples spending time exclusively together is, in reality, a limited time which Lyndsey had to adapt to. There certainly were men who drank in the bar whose partners rarely came to the pub, others drank in the bar or little lounge and their partners in the children's room, for those who did drink together they sit at table with other couples where the men talk to the men and the women the women.

Drinking maintains gender segregation but this is not just hegemonic masculinity at play. The differing worlds of men and women are reflected in the way people mix in the pub, and certainly these divides are reinforced there, but it would be wrong to presume a strong male domination. The separation is largely seen as 'e does 'is thing I do mine when we're out' (Brenda) and for the younger women that 'if the boys are together then go out as a group of girls and do our own thing' (Poppy), something that is monitored by endless text messages if the girls are away from the pub. Securing a partner is a requisite of people's lives, as much for the men as for the women, recognising the divide between men and women's lives in the pub can be seen as both a more intense experience of defined gender roles and also a security or in some senses almost, if not a freedom, a certain power that 'doing' gender in the particular environment gives women. West and Zimmerman (1987:129) state that-'the 'doing' of gender is undertaken by women and men whose competence as members of society is hostage to its production'. For men and women in the pub the wider societal representations of white working class gender identity is presented as problematic, vulnerable to ridicule, of getting 'it' wrong of being 'too much'. Within the pub competency in doing gender is more achievable and regulated within ideologies of which we are in part the makers. For some men, the hypermasculine identity of violence may have provenance in the pub but this again this is open to challenge.

Fear and threat and 'gobby cows'

In general, acts of violence of any form are not that common. In the years of the study, and all the years I have drunk in the pub, violence has not been common, if

you don't include drunken squabbles on a Friday or Saturday night. The pub may have a 'rough' feel, shouting is common, and it is generally a loud place. Swearing is the norm, though swearing for some men in front of children and women is frowned upon. And, as will be discussed in the chapter on violence, this is a white working class estate pub; there is an expectation of situations arising that may become violent, boys are encouraged to 'stick up' for themselves and learn certain aspects of what is expected of them as young men that become 'flash points' for potential violence. What is acceptable in terms of what is said or done to women, the whole host of things that can be read as 'taking the piss' are situations you learn to read as flash points for others to either try and talk them down or get them or yourself out of. As discussed earlier in the Halloween Party example, no women intervened. Firstly, they were 'just 'avin' a laff', secondly that would destroy Dave's reputation as a man. Male gender identities when performed with a threat of violence, however, are taken seriously but this does not mean that women are always passive in situations.¹⁸ One of the aspects of women's gender identity in the pub is heavily invested in the role of mother, an identity that affords high levels of power and a potential female threat of violence or for the man to lose face. Identity is constructed through social interactions in specific locations which themselves both reflect and affect the construction and performance of particular identities (McDowell, 2003)

An example being one time my daughter was working during one of the closed room poker games at which Coup and Shep were regular players. The bar was closing and she told them they could not have any more drinks. Coup began to shout at her 'we're gonna get you fired, who do you think you're talking to', eventually reducing my daughter to tears. The next day I joined Coup and Shep to have a smoke:

Su: What happened last night?

Coup: What you on about Curly?

¹⁸ I am not discussing domestic violence here, this is a discussion only about certain situations concerning threat of violence in the pub.

Su: Last night with my daughter what happened?

Shep: She's a gobby cow

Coup: You should do something with her

Su: She's my daughter she's like her mom

Coup: She was mouthing off gobby little shit fuck off

Su: She's my daughter if she's done something you tell me and I'll sort it

Coup: See where she gets it from now fuck off

Su: Yeah but she's sixteen and I'm not, made you feel good to make a sixteen year old girl cry? Wouldn't do it to a woman though would you? you're pathetic, you keep away from my kid

Shep: Ark at you, you're alright if ya don't look at ya face

Su: I don't understand

Coup: Nice arse, Shame about the face

Su: I mean I don't understand why you think I give a flying fuck what you think of me, keep away from my kid.

The identity of mother afforded me the space to challenge aggressive behaviour towards my daughter. In this sense, my identity as mother has the power to challenge the privileged masculine identity within the pub. They had, in their terms, asserted their masculine right to order my daughter around, and had become aggressive when they were challenged by her; being young and on her own in the room with them she had little power position to challenge them. Making sure I publically 'called them', confronted them, on what happened made sure that such an overt show of masculine aggression was seen to be wrong, they were bullying a young woman, specifically my daughter. Hypermasculinity may operate within the pub, but this can only operate with consensus of the men *and* women there. The 'ark

at you' and 'nice arse shame about the face' comments are both of them trying to reassert some form of domination by sexualising my body (as will be discussed in the Sexuality chapter) and trying to ridicule me to regain some power and draw others in through mockery to diffuse the situation. This did not work; I had won the banter and was in the right to 'call them' on their treatment of my daughter.

Also there are examples where women have the potential, and are validated in being violent, again regarding children. Kirsty had moved in with her boyfriend when she was seventeen. Kirsty's dad, Del, is part of the daily life of the pub, and her mom, Kelly, (a well-known 'gobby cow') was boycotting the pub at the time of this instance having broken her ankle falling off the bar step. Kirsty was having problems with her boyfriend Sulaman who had, 'started to slap me about a bit' (Kirsty) which was known by the younger women, and some of the older women in the pub, but she had moved several miles away and had stopped seeing her family and coming in the pub. We deliberately invited Kirsty to perform the sponsored head shaving at an organised charity event in support of the local hospice as she has an NVQ level 2 in Hair and Beauty; she was not working at the time as Sulaman did not like her going out. When Kirsty arrived she had cut and dyed her hair, was wearing make-up, jewellery, a short skirt and low cut top; this was a pub party. On arriving she was hugged by the group of women and she burst into tears when told how beautiful she was looking. After the cutting of hair event, playing to the audience, she started to join in with the general banter of the pub on a party night, with the women making sure she felt good about herself as she was now away from 'that twat of a boyfriend' (Jane). A couple of hours later a group of the women, myself and Kirsty included, were stood outside drinking and having a smoke when 'the boyfriend' turned up calling Kirsty over to the far end of the car park away from us where he was parked:

Emma: Don't you dare go over

Su: Kirst don't you know why 'es turned up tell 'im get lost

Jane: Don't go over Kirst come on you've made your move now you'll be alright

Kirsty: I know I'll just go an' tell 'im to go

Su: Don't you dare that's 'ow they get you over there

Kirsty: I just need to tell 'im it's over

Su: 'e knows that's why 'e's 'ere to get you to go 'ome 'e don't like it you daft sod

Emma: you'll be in that car tonight'll be lovely tomorrow a slap god tonight a slap you know it 'e don't love ya 'e aint gonna change you can't change a bloke like 'im fists bigger than 'is dick you know that

Su: You know it Kirst, 'es only 'ere cos 'e knows you're back with family and friends you made the break 'es scared. He don't love you, 'e just wants it to be about 'im you know that

Emma: [to Sulaman] Fuck off you twat she aint goin' with ya

Kirsty: let me just go tell 'im

Jane: Tell 'im what 'you're a twat'?

Kirsty: it's over you know?

Kirsty went to talk with the boyfriend who after a couple of minutes grabbed her arm to get her in the car. Jane grabbed Kirsty and Emma and myself faced Sulaman:

Emma: Fuck off! You've been told

Sulaman: [To Kirsty] You gotta come 'ome now I aint tellin' ya anymore

Su: She aint gotta go anywhere with you, go 'ome

Sulaman: You can't talk to me like that

[shoved me in the shoulder and tried to push past Emma]

Su: I Just 'ave

Emma: Go on 'it me big boy I've been 'it before I'll fuckin' floor ya. Don't like it when women stand up to you do ya? We coud tear ya balls off! Go near 'er

[Kirsty] again, even think of layin' a hand on her, phonin', textin' I'll feed ya your balls go it?

Su: Told ya to go 'ome. She's a babee, we're not. I'd go 'ome if I was you.

Jane: Just fuck off cos if they don't 'it ya I will.

Sulaman: Come on baby come home

Su: Do you not get it? She aint goin' with you, she's come 'ome'

Kirsty: Fuck off and leave me alone Dad'll come and get my stuff.

Emma: No, send ya mom!

I have kept this as a rather long account for several reasons. Firstly, although there were men outside at the time they did not get involved as they would usually do if there is a perception of women being under threat from a man. Partly this is due to men's reluctance to intervene in a situation like this one, when 'she's off on one in full flight' (Mike); women's fights¹⁹ especially fights about children are notorious for being indiscriminately violent and this was an argument about domestic violence against a young woman who was still considered to be a child. Secondly, the point is that Kirsty is still considered to be a child in the relationship with Sulaman, she had made the mistake of leaving home before she was ready to and in coming back to the pub it was seen that she was trying to come home. Thirdly the references to our experiences in the interaction trying to get Kirsty to recognise the situation she was in having left would very likely result in being hit if she went home with him. The narrative was aimed at him as much as her, showing that this was a situation that we knew, trying to get her over to the car, remove her from friends and family and back in control. As with the previous example with Lyndsey, this is a group of women attempting to show a young woman that this is nothing new, most of us have been there and attempting to help her through the situation. The comments of 'fists bigger than 'is dick' and 'I've been 'it before' are especially telling referring to the

¹⁹ See Greer quote page 77)

temptation to stay in a relationship for the sex is outweighed by the violence, and attempting, successfully, to let Sulaman know that his assumed power through hitting would not work in the situation. The potential for Sulaman to become the person experiencing violence in this situation was real, especially with Kirsty's mother.

Conclusion

The performance of masculinity and hyper-masculinity is evident in the pub, as is the need of some of the men for comfort of a relationship, the security of the home-which works in the division of labour and roles- man in the hyper-masculine world of work and women working as well as caring for the children and the home. But as shown women's ability to be violent is recognised, yet somehow is never as prevalent in the day-to-day life of the pub, but it is real. The domination of violence in the ideologies of white working class men perpetuates the idea of them being too much. For the women femininity is never ascribed, or really achieved again we are too much, the idea of too much focuses on sexuality and the sexualised body which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Chapter Six: Fat sex: From femininity to sexuality

Introduction

In the pub heterosexuality rules. There is a gap that exists between the worlds of men and women within the pub that both creates and reinforces the heteronormative identities of masculine and feminine. These, in turn, mirror the social production of white working class identity. Suffice to say that the social representation of white working class masculinity is usually one of men being sexually promiscuous and generally feckless - Wayne Rooney, Ashley Cole and Gaz from *Geordie Shore*. Correspondingly, white working class women are presented as promiscuous and polluting, with working class women, especially younger women, represented as sexually out of control and not respectable (Lawler 2005, Skeggs 2005, Hester and Walters 2015). These views of sexual relationships are, however, overly simplistic. In reality, sexual relationships in the pub are a complex area governed by cultural rules of appropriateness and respectability which seem at first to be strongly tied to the heteronormative, the concept of gender appropriateness and monogamy but are, in fact, quite fluid. This area of working class gendered life offers the best examples of strong adherence to the dominant heteronormative sexual identity produced in the macro structure, but also shows how at the micro (or at a more personal level) this identity is flexible, even in some areas being a myth rather than reality.

It has been argued by some feminist social interactionists and ethnomethodologists that gender is an emergent property of situated interaction rather than a role or attribute (Coltrane 1989; Kessler and McKenna 1978; West and Fenstermaker 1993; West and Zimmerman 1987). As such, deeply held and typically non-conscious beliefs about men and women's essential natures shape how gender is accomplished in everyday interactions. Further, because those beliefs are moulded by existing macro-structural power relations, the culturally appropriate ways of producing gender favour men's interests over those of women. In this manner, gendered power relations are reproduced (Pyke 1996). This, as has been shown previously, can

be seen in the interactions in the pub. However, to take perhaps the most abiding structural power relation, sexuality, and the interactions in the pub show interplay between the doxa of sexuality is, if not negotiated then, for want of a better phrase, a performed sexuality.

Judith Butler (1997) uses Althusser's 'interpellation' as a means to explain how conventions, or collections of conventions, gain particular cultural meanings. According to Butler reality takes shape through reiterative performances. In the case of sexuality presentation 'of a softer, more subdued, 'erotic' 'feminine sexuality' brings that characteristic into a space that is culturally intelligible, instantiating a particular category of sexual expression. Thus, 'conventions such as the idea that women prefer erotica, or softer forms of sexual expression serve to ensure that the breadth of women's sexual expression and desire are kept simmering under the surface' (Mars 2007: 1). Mars goes on to argue that there exists the possibility of resistance to, or transfiguration of, the signs and symbols that a culture assigns, and I would argue that as with femininity the signs and symbols of working class sexuality are presented and performed in the pub, but the cultural meaning and significance of sexuality is often misconstrued. In this chapter I discuss the role of sexuality in the day to day performance of heterosexuality for people in the pub, though I will specifically focus on women as obviously this the area I have most access to. Specifically I will discuss how heteronormative ideologies are performed and (if not resisted) struggled with, in adhering to traditional socially prescribed gender roles, the ideologies of passive sexual women and predatorily sexual men. To make sense of a complex area I will discuss the pub as a place of production of heteronormative sexuality discussing the challenge for women of looking and being 'sexy', presumption of male domination of active sexuality including constant heteronormative sexual banter then moving onto day-to-day realities of people's sex lives in the pub looking at affairs, affairs that are considered wrong, accepted affairs, playing away and fuck buddies, so how people negotiate monogamy and their sexual lives.

Post Labour

Looking sexy is a high risk strategy, since it makes you vulnerable to derision from both men and women. The younger women tend to wear skin tight jeans or 'cystitis jeans' as they are referred to. At the time of the study hipster jeans and belly tops were in fashion, allowing the younger women to show off belly button piercings and lower back tattoos. This often led to older women and the men joking about them, this was usually if the woman had a roll of fat hanging over the top of the jeans²⁰, or stretch marks could be seen. Rolls of fat or stretch marks are not considered appropriate for public display and more importantly, are not considered sexy in younger women.

Appropriateness and body size is an issue. An example here is Nicky wearing a low cut top showing a large amount of cleavage. Sheila started making comments about the size of Nicky's breasts and then generally her size, this in itself is not unusual, but she then went on to try to put beer mats down Nicky's cleavage, the situation was diffused by people calling Sheila off telling her she was pissed again, cooling Nicky down by emphasising that Sheila 'was pissed and to pay no attention as she has no tits and she is only jealous, cos she's as flat as an ironing board' (Neil).

There seems to be a distinction here between appreciation of other people's clothes; especially if they are a bargain, and the wearing of them. This is more than the policing of other people's bodies it is also a controlling of sexuality, or at least overt displays of sexuality. The constant policing of women's bodies cannot be over emphasised, and this policing is often linked to your standing in the group of women as well as the pub community as a whole. A common theme for the women in the study is managing the after effects of pregnancy on our bodies. Constant references to tits being down by their bellies, ducks arse bottoms, needing a skate board for your arse, cottage cheese arse or thighs, thunder thighs, jelly bellies are the way most women describe their own and other women's bodies after having children.

²⁰ A muffin

The majority of women describe 'giving up' on their bodies after pregnancy as a lost cause: 'Christ you'd never get this lot back into shape after pushing out two kids, what's the point' (Karen). Or a good example being a conversation between Karen and Sally who had just experienced a difficult birth and was worried that her boyfriend, Keiran would not be interested in her. Sally was finding it difficult to 'shift the baby fat' and having had a perineal tear during labour was feeling that she would be 'too loose' to be sexually interesting to Keiran.

Having laughed off the advice Sally had been given by the health visitor; or 'hells visitors', Siobhan explained: 'Look don't worry I can get two Tampax in side ways after 'avin our Aileen he's [the husband] very understanding about it. After an afternoon on the mild²¹ he don't care that much anyway he's there humping away, it just takes a bit more imagination'. Or a conversation that took place between Sheila and a doctor during a pre-operation exam²². On doing the trunk exam the male doctor commented that: 'most ladies don't like this bit when they've had lots of babies' Sheila replied 'Yeah you wouldn't even notice that jelly belly if you were humping on top of me with your balls banging up me arse'.

Sheila's reaction to the doctor was to do with drawing attention to her belly and stretch marks after five pregnancies, where her rejection of the notion of sexual attraction being linked to how her body looks is drawn from her experience of continuing to have sex with her husband and other men. The doctor's misguided attempt to reassure her that she held in common with other women who had the physical signs of pregnancies, an unease of how her body looked, was misguided not because she did not feel awkward about the changes to her body as she did, all of us discussed problems of how we felt about our bodies after pregnancies. Sheila, along with Siobhan and the majority of the women in the study, viewed her body in a different way post pregnancies, you now sexualise and give up any attempt to

²¹ A low ABV beer common in The Midlands

²² I often went with various women to various types of appointments. This was not just me - women often go with each other to appointments for support, especially medical appointments.

feminise the body. How her body looks does not mean she is not sexually attractive. No link to Hera here, no return to the pool to renew your virginity and performance of femininity, for women in the group being post pregnancy means sexuality carries cultural capital, but sexuality carries penalties of derision and or exclusion if not played or performed correctly.

Women openly talk to each other about their sex lives, active or inactive. Most discussions are supportive of the men and women involved, punctuated with humour and are graphic, it is now a standing joke that I blush so easily, although I never found any of the conversations embarrassing. Discussions regarding medical issues which may impede sex such as, thrush 'yoghurt's best and make sure you wash your rabbit', vaginal dryness, or post sex bleeding are frank and informative. Information is pooled from autobiography and shared stories from family and friends.

Older women were the main source of support on this topic. One Saturday afternoon Nicky was telling the group a sexually disastrous night with a man she had been seeing. They were good friends, got on well and he got on well with her kids so she decided to 'give him a try':

Nicky: I couldn't believe it, it was the same size as me thumb I've never seen one so small!

Sheila: Same as our Sam, it's his weight 'e cant 'elp it that's why I've got me rabbit and a few bits.

Nicky: I couldn't 'ardly feel it I didn't know it was in I didn't know what to do with meself

Karen: Get your hips up, get on your knees and show 'im what to do with a rabbit first.

Discussions around sex can often have a serious tone as not having sex or being unsatisfied with sex with a partner is taken as an indicator of there being something

wrong in the relationship and of course have the potential to damage the man's reputation:

Mary: God I aint 'ad a bit in ages 'es gone off the boil

Karen: Its cos your Leah 'as started nursery he thinks you're gonna get up the duff again

Mary: Na 'es just gone off it

Sheila: Bet ya. Every time you get one of 'em out of nappies you get up the duff agen, surprised you don't fall over without a pushchair in front of ya.

As Mary and Lewis had five children ranging in age from four to thirteen, some of the older women concluded that Lewis's fear of having another child may well be the cause of his reluctance to have sex:

Mary: It aint right though is it they give it all the big talk 'ere then nothing when you get 'ome

Sheila: Well that's blokes aint it? All talk in front of their mates then like little boys when they're 'ome

This dichotomy was understood and constantly referred to but never really discussed openly. The talk from the men was openly sexual banter, usually sexually explicit, yet the women's experience of sexual relationships or sexual encounters with them usually showed the contrary. One party evening towards the end of the night the slow music started April began slow dancing with her partner, Droopey Stewey:

Su: Look at you two groping away to 'the erection section'

April: Yeah won't get me hopes up, a quick feel up is alright but he won't get it up later he's too pissed

Karen: You should put 'im on the mild takes longer for 'em to get pissed

Tina: Our Rich's the opposite after a day on the beer he can go all night

April: Yeah alright don't rub it in, he can't keep it up most of the time anyway

Sheila: What you tried?

April: Y'know usual but it don't always work

Sheila: We'll go up town and get 'im some stuff

Karen: Take 'im to the doctor might be 'is blood pressure

Tina: Go up town and get yourself a new bloke he's a prat anyway, that and droop forget it.

Or men being more romantic:

Emma: Ark at 'im going on Mr Big did I tell you what he did last Friday?

Su: No I wasn't in Saturday

Emma: I got in from work an 'e was upstairs. When I went up he'd changed the bed there was candles and stuff and he'd scattered rose petals all over the bed aint that lovely?

Su: Well yeah but it just means you've gorra Hoover the rose petal up don't it?

Emma: No wonder you're on your own they don't stand a chance with you do they?

Despite the frank and open discussions around wanting sex and sexual frustration amongst the group, the wider narrative and doxa of sexuality is that the man is always sexually interested, a sexual predator 'man the hunter', as will be discussed later in the example given by Carl, whilst a woman is more sexually ambivalent, has to be persuaded, or just not interested. But talking with Paul one day at the start of his relationship with Louise this idea is shown as challengeable as he explained he was finding it difficult 'keeping up' with Louise as she constantly wanted sex:

Paul: Its every morning, every night Su I hate the weekends I can't just get up go get me paper and sort me bets out she's on me all the time

Su: You should be flattered you must be doing something right she keeps coming back for more

Paul: But I'm knackered I'm not a kid anymore three four times a day fine when you're a lad

Su: It'll calm down its cos its new y'know what it's like can't keep your 'ands off each other then can't stand the sound of 'em breathing

Paul: But I can't cum all the time, I try I give it a good go I'm 'avin' to fake it never 'ad a woman do it, now I'm doin' it to keep 'er happy like

Su: She knows 'ow 'ard your job is your knackered 'ave a bad back for a week give yourself a rest get your blood pressure checked

Paul: That won't work she'll want something else.

Men rarely discuss openly the difficulties they are having in their sex lives. I of course have no access to what they say to each other, though I was sometimes involved with discussions with individual men about sex. The talk of lack of a sex life that is the banter between the general group of men is usually responded to by the women with 'gone off it' or 'too knackered' response, again the idea of the respectable woman.

The idea of maintaining the idea of respectability is shown in Anne Summer's parties, sex toys and trips to sex shops. Not all of the women went on the trips to town to visit the sex shops. As these days were turned into a day out with a meal at a cheap Chinese buffet restaurant and a pub crawl, some women went along for 'the laugh'. Ann Summers parties were treated in much the same light. Anne Summer's parties were often held, if not by women in the group, by women known to them as it was a way of making some money as well as having a laugh. Preparation for the two events took time with people being asked if they were 'up for it'.

Responses varied from people who were 'up for it' as they wanted to get clothes, sex toys, creams/lubricants, lingerie or in the case of shops, new pornography, then there were the women who were 'coming for a laugh', who usually bought something but made a joke of it, to the women who asserted 'it's not my sort of thing' but who usually came to the parties and bought something but needed to make a display of 'respectability' about sex and sexuality.

The main thing to remember here is the performance aspect of sexuality, of owning a sexual identity as part of your gender identity. There are three differing aspects at work here. Firstly for a small group of women there is an idea that 'sex products' mean there is a need in their sexual relationships, that this is a direct reflection on their and their partner's sexual ability. Anything outside of the 'normal' is considered to be a threat to their understanding and practice of their sexuality. So humour is used as a way for them to participate without losing face or losing the respectably sexual aspect of their sexuality performance.

For others, sex products are a well-accepted part of their own sex life and identity, as well as the sex life they share with their partners if they have one. It is noteworthy that lingerie is not just bought by those in relationships, wearing 'sexy underwear' was often talked about as being done to make you feel good about yourself - 'No one knows you've got it on, it makes you feel good'. The secret is important here, a part of owning your own sexual identity, Nicky on a regular basis would wear a Basque under jogging bottoms and fleece when she went to pick up her daughter from school, 'They're goin' on about Mrs this an' that an 'ow many times she's [the daughter] wet 'erself and I'm thinking you don't know I've got my favourite Basque on'. For others, the commodification of sex is well accepted and incorporated into their sexual identities and sex lives. The division between the conversations of the women and Paul's discussion of difficulties 'keeping up with' Louise's desire for sex are not compatible with the general ideology of the sexually indifferent woman and the predatory male, so how is this dichotomy managed? Through sexual banter and the consistency of the ideology of monogamy.

Sexual banter: 'avin a laff, an' keepin' it straight'

It is presumed and expected that all people are sexually active, and that if they are not, then they want to be, as being sexually active is normal, healthy and (to be honest) what you're supposed to do. A good night out in the words of Steve, though part of the narrative of the majority of the men even if talking retrospectively, is 'a few beers, a fight, a bag of chips and a fuck'. Talk about sex is common amongst women and men, sexual jokes about women's bodies is part of the general banter of the pub, and sexual innuendo is a constant for both sexes. This sexual dialogue is seen almost as a skilled game; being able to take and give back comments is seen as being part of the group. If a woman objects to a comment then she is belittled for not having a sense of humour. If a man reacts badly to a comment made to him by a woman then he is derided to a far greater extent than a woman would be, as sex and sexual banter is seen as a male dominated area. Although the game being played is played in both directions, sexual innuendo is seen to be a mainly male preserve, and so, in returning comments, a woman has to be careful how far she goes. To belittle a man's sexuality, especially to question or deride a man's sexual prowess, is dangerous as it is viewed as the worst insult a woman can deliver to a man - especially if they have had sex. Sex then provides excellent material for insulting others, whether about level of knowledge, extent of experience, characteristics of girlfriend, or whatever. Frequently, the insults are levelled by men at a supposed girlfriend or a woman the man is supposed to fancy, rather than directly taunting him. A good example of this way of refracting insults was when Darren started a relationship with a younger woman. The relationship was encouraged at first as Darren had been single for some time; however, difficulties arose when it seemed to others that she was trying to trap Darren into having another child and, more importantly, when it seemed to others that she was not looking after his pre-teen daughter properly. Darren's daughter was primarily cared for by the group as Darren was at this point blind and was the sole carer for both of his children and his elderly

mother. Comments started to be made in the pub and Darren started to distance himself from this younger woman. A memorable comment was when Neil shouted out: 'Hey Darren it's a good job you can read braille with tits like hers'.

Although the insult was formulated around the woman, it is clearly directed for Darren to understand the level of unhappiness around the relationship. Derision makes you vulnerable in many ways. For a woman to taunt a man with whom she has a long standing relationship obviously puts pressure on their relationship, restricting her access to sex and the status afforded from the 'good respectable' relationship. Also, for a woman to taunt a man with whom she has a long standing relationship would undermine his, and her, status in the group, putting the relationship under threat. To be too verbally aggressive as a woman decreases the amount of respect given from both genders. As has been discussed, women can be aggressive in certain situations around children or protecting themselves from predatory men, but in day-to-day interaction the game is that we 'bat back' sexual banter without being too aggressive.

Not all conversations amongst the women focus on sex, but will drift that way after a while, taking the form of jokes or passing information/advice. My single status being seen if not abnormal, at least unusual, especially concerning my sex life. It is taken that women are sexually active and knowledgeable. The performance of 'not interested in sex' in a wider mixed gender setting is well rehearsed and played as a respectable and recognisable identity that usually bears no reality. In reality, lack of interest in sex was due to tiredness post child birth or the strain of looking after young children, or being bored with the sex life with their partner. Again, conversations were largely supportive when the case was to do with tiredness, when it comes to boredom the advice is about how to satisfy yourself or, for some, how to find someone to have a fling with. As discussed about the changing attitude of the feminine to the sexual body, the identity of the virginal chaste woman like the feminine is not sustainable, in truth it can be argued that it was never attainable.

The importance of sex may rule the banter of the pub as there is a constant presumption of the need, or even right, of adults to be sexually active; however it is also presumed that people have a desire to, and will form, a monogamous relationship. During the time of the study there were various long term affairs occurring. This may seem contradictory in terms of the promotion of monogamy in the pub, especially the protection of women from the predatory sexual male, however the situation needs to be viewed in context. Serious relationships are treated with a high level of territorialism, which again may seem contradictory in light of the 'playing away' that happens on special occasions. However, attention (especially flirting) is closely monitored, particularly as the male sexual predator is closely linked as part of the male identity.

The identity of sexual predator is applied to the majority of men, and men who are not closely linked or known in the pub are monitored more closely. One Karaoke evening an unknown man was talking to and buying drinks for one of the young women who has a low level of learning difficulties. A couple of the men approached him and began to persuade the young woman to go and sit with the women, while another couple of men explained to the unknown man that it was time for him to leave and they would 'help him' if he didn't leave right now. Or, as Maureen's husband happily explained to me, that over the many years they had been together that he no problem with Maureen drinking in the pub when he was working away from home, as all his mates would keep an eye on her and 'sort anybody out who got the any ideas'. But monogamy is a fluid concept, there are constant examples of people of both sexes having sex outside of the monogamous relationship. So considering the strong adherence to ideologies of monogamy there seems to be a dichotomy in the amount of sexual activity outside of a monogamous relationship. The answer is alongside the promotion of monogamy as a desired state; 'every pot has a lid', runs the ideology that having sex is natural compulsion of a healthy adult, so sex that occurs outside a monogamous relationship is explained, justified and condoned under the following categories: a quickie at a party which is meaningless all part of what can be viewed as a potlatch such as the Mayday tradition. A fling,

again meaningless as both parties see it as a short term sexual interest. Affairs last longer but have two responses, turning a blind eye to an affair is all part of keeping a relationship going in pub terms, and an affair where there is threat to the relationship as one of the people involved wants to form a monogamous relationship, then there is the fuck buddy nothing to do with a relationship just sex but over a longer period of time than a quickie. At any given time during the time I am writing about, all aspects of these examples sex outside of a monogamous relationship were in play, but again the idea of a monogamous relationship was always promoted as the right thing to do, to explore this further I will now turn to fluidity in relationships.

Some of the relationships of the women in the group were temporary or fluid. Originally twelve of the women were in long term relationships or marriages, unfortunately two of those women died. Three of the women remained single throughout the study, others moved in and out of relationships and some had sexual flings with men in the pub or had 'fuck buddies'. The emotional complexity of relationships is one of the issues that occupies a great deal of talking time and support amongst the group, as well as wanting sex. People's perceptions of relationships present as traditional monogamous relationship; man the provider with the woman taking care of house and children, working outside the home part time when the children start school. This illusion is vehemently protected as the 'right' thing, calling on nature as a way of explaining the importance of the monogamous family unit. This is seen as most under threat in the next chapter when family is discussed. In reality this ideal is flawed – being economically dependent on a man is risky, as most relationships are not permanent, yet this mythical idea of relationships seems to persist. The economic aspect will be discussed in the chapter on children, but the idea of a monogamous relationship for life persists against empirical evidence, lived experience and the many instances of 'one offs', flings and affairs and it may seem that working class women are particularly vulnerable to relationship breakdown due to their partner's infidelity continuing the presentation of the overtly sexual working class man.

To return to Pyke (1996), she argues that working-class men, for example self-employed contractors, have jobs that could provide a smokescreen for leisure, generally do not provide cover for leisure as middle class men do in her study. Instead, working class men tended to be more blatant in their pursuit of leisure away from their families. These men were also more careless in hiding their extramarital affairs and, consequently, were more likely to get caught (cf. Pyke 1996). Here I want to take the argument back to imposition of values that may not have significance here. The presumption of 'getting caught' is that there is something wrong with what the men are doing, and it is never addressed who the men are having sex with, presumably working class women who may or may not be in relationships. In Pykes' (1996) study there is the point of the relationship breaking down, but the study is based on relationship breakdown the women choose not to be in or go back to the relationship. This is not reflected in the pub, and I would argue further, as sexuality is more fluid, sex is more negotiated as women's lives develop. Again there are bits of fun - sex is not always something to taken seriously: Diane, Becky, April and Poppy spoke of end of the night sex with Pete, a go to man no questions asked sex and they all drank with his wife at the Saturday karaoke night. Flings and affairs reflect much more the development of women's lives than the idea of a predatory man. But not all affairs are accepted especially if the affair is seen to threaten a relationship.

Wrong affairs

When Diane began to work behind the bar, she was initially quite shy with people. Some of the women began talking to her to help her make friends, however when all such attempts to befriend her were rejected the women decided that she was 'one of those women who are only interested in men'. Over several shifts, Diane began to wear more make-up, her skirts became shorter or jeans tighter, and her tops became lower. This caused comment on several occasions, and as a result she was avoided by most of the women, and largely the men became a bit suspicious of her change. Within a further few weeks Diane started to spend time drinking with one of the

widowers, Jack. This was frowned upon as she did not pay any attention to his children, and I was doing the childcare. It was considered inappropriate by the men as she was nothing like his dead wife Siobhan:

Carl: god Tony how desperate are you for a shag taking that home with you?

Jack: She's alright once you get to know her

Dave: What's to get to know a cleavage and a laugh that could cut glass

Jack: yeah well there's that but she's Ok

Carl: Nah you'd have to be desperate to go for that.

Diane had rejected the support of the group of women, had taken an overtly sexual approach in terms of dress, and was mixing with one of the customers who was still being protected by the group due to the recent death of his wife. Not having the support of the women meant that in engaging in sexual bantering she created a reputation of being too sexual, of being 'loose' - her behaviour and dress (and the relationship between the two) was considered to be inappropriate. After a short time, Diane established a relationship with Toby which caused her even more problems, since Toby is a member of one of the big estate families and is married. Toby's wife Mandy, although not a regular in the pub, is respected by the group, and his behaviour was seen to be 'out of order':

Peter: hey Toby what are you doing with that slag?

Toby: We're just having some fun

Paul²³: You're mad your Mandy is alright you don't want to lose her just for a fling

Carl: What you doing with a camel toe²⁴

Dave: god its not just that 'er cleavage would eat you alive

²³ Paul is Toby's paternal uncle

²⁴ A term used for women who wear tight jeans so that their labia are clearly visible.

Carl: god yeah not just that you could climb on top of that but not be sure you'd ever get out you might drown ow many been in before you

Dave: Ar that's true we haven't seen Martin in a while the next time you're in there 'ave look see if 'es lost in there

Toby: Fuck off

The continuing affair between Diane and Toby came to a head one afternoon when a group of the men refused to drink in a room where she was serving. It was settled when Diane was asked to only work in one room so this group of men could use the other room. When Mandy came into the pub one Saturday night to confront Diane, the majority of the pub cheered her on, and the situation was only resolved when the landlady took Mandy into the back to calm her down; this was responded to with boos of derision from the group.

It would seem that there is a contradiction here – after all, sexual affairs are reasonably common, there are often one nighters put down to too much beer at special occasions and parties, flings explained away by boredom in a relationship, or in the case of some men feeling excluded from the woman's attention after the giving birth, but this was an open affair that was not consented to by Mandy and this is the main differentiating factors here. Mandy, Toby's wife, is respected by the group; she is a good woman who works hard, keeps a good home, goes to bingo and comes to the pub on special occasions she is, though mainly an absentee, a respected member of the group of women in the pub. Diane, in contrast, had refused to integrate with the women and is seen as sexually inappropriate and a sexual predator. The majority of the blame in this situation has been placed on Diane, though it is worth noting that Toby at the time was ostracised by most of his family who drink in the pub.

One of the reasons for the disapproval shown towards Toby is given as 'you don't shit on your own doorstep'. Sexual flirting is fine, sexual 'flings' are normalised, but affairs are not acceptable in your local pub when they are threat to your relationship, not only because of the problem for the relationship but because of the problems

threatening affairs cause in the larger group of the pub. This incident caused many problems in the group, and this is one of the reasons that affairs taking place in the pub are frowned upon - they cause problems. A form of morality exists that accepts that people will maintain a relationship for some time, and within that relationship a certain amount of flirting or 'playing away' will occur, and will be accepted, so long as this is not made too evident or taken too seriously. For some of the group, ensuring this (to what to some might seem to be a slightly warped) version of monogamy is one reasons that people monitor each other.

Talk within the group one day turned to the Diane/Toby problem and the topic of sexual exclusivity. Generally, I was aware of the unrest in the pub about the problem, conversations were dominated by the situation with a consensus that Diane was in the wrong. I pointed out that Diane was single so was free to make a play, but this was quickly and loudly shouted down as she had broken the rules by 'making a play' for another woman's man. My attempt to say that he wouldn't have done it if he didn't want to was met with another chorus of derision:

Sheila: Fuck off Su women like her prey on stupid twats like 'im

Emma: He thinks with his dick, course he's gonna go for it you're just saying that cos you aint got a man to keep her away from

Su: yeah but that's what I'm saying, if I did have a man I couldn't stop him going off if he wanted to

Tina: Yeah you can, house bricks - that neuters 'em. If they think with their dick you have to make sure they keep close to home

Su: So why are you having a go at 'er then? If he thinks with his dick then she's the prat for letting 'im get in her knickers

Sheila: Yeah but she's in love aint she the silly fucking cow has fallen for the line that he'll leave Mandy.

There was no evidence for these conclusions regarding Diane's reasoning at the time, the presumption (which turned out to be true) that Diane was waiting for Toby

to leave his wife was based on the some of the women's experiences as younger women being involved with older men (although this would not be viewed as hypocritical, as by this point Diane was in the same age bracket as the majority of the women, and therefore was 'old enough to know better'). This is where the divide can be seen: flings, or one night stands are normalised and explained away as a bit of fun, no harm done, and it is by and large expected and accepted within most of the relationships. Where flings cease to be acceptable is when sex happens frequently or when there is an expectation that a relationship will develop. Long term affairs do occur (as with Paul and Shirley discussed later), however what made the situation different with Diane and Toby was that Mandy was not ready to accept Toby having an affair but this is not always the case.

'I've got my 'ouse 'n me kids the rest is just bollocks' (Tracey)

Pyke's (1996: 531) findings do though assert that power practices bolster and reinforce gender differences, but that said, although women seem to promote male power at the expense of their own, this is often to reinforce their positive identities as women.

Thus, rather than viewing interpersonal power as a deliberate goal in and of itself, toward which men and women are equally motivated, researchers must consider how power practices are a by-product of the manufacturing of gender differences. We can do so by looking for circumstances in which women behave in ways that bolster men's power, at the expense of their own, as a means of celebrating essential differences and asserting their identity as women.

An example of this is this though it may seem controversial is the open acceptance in some circumstances of affairs. This is of course nuanced. As said, flings are usually tolerated by both genders, but in some circumstances long term affairs are accepted. The explanation for this is as said by Siobhan: 'I got what I want, so long as he comes 'ome I don't care'. Talking with people about this, this seemed to be a general opinion. For some women once they had established a house and had their children the relationship with their partner changed. Carl would come into the pub with work

mates every evening on his way home from work, and would spend every weekend afternoon in the pub playing dominoes:

Carl: She'll watch Coronation Street and East Enders then come and fetch me.

Finbar: I bought her the house, she's got the dog and the kids, if I'm too pissed I sleep on the settee.

Another good example being Fred and Janet who had married at seventeen and have been married for nearly fifty years:

Fred: I'd go and do a bit of painting or whatever over the road 'ave a quickie then go home, there is always some women who want a quickie a bit of fun. Janet got a bit fed up after the kids had grown up and chucked me out but we were upstairs at it when the divorce papers dropped through the door so we decided to get back together.

Su: Your Janet's a saint you'd 'ave been a patio for me years ago

Fred: That's not fair Su I look after Janet she has never wanted for nothing I treat 'er like a queen you know I do.

The separation of men and women's lives helps to maintain relationships, for some of the women keeping a good, clean, well maintained, comfortable and with gadgets, home and children is their realm, where they have power. To exemplify this point I turn to the relationship between Siobhan and Jack. For Siobhan the birth of her last child meant the distancing between herself and Jack, to the extent that when new management took over the pub they did not know that Siobhan and Jack were a couple. Siobhan was in the children's room with her children, Jack in the lounge playing dominoes, occasionally sending a drink through for Siobhan but never the kids. She explained that the children were her department so he was not really involved. Jack described to me one afternoon how, since the birth of their last child he felt excluded from Siobhan, that she got all the attention and love she needed from the children. Siobhan was fully aware of his affair, expressing that so long as it did not interfere with her home or kids, i.e. the kids didn't find out and he didn't

have sex in the house with the other woman or leave her, she didn't mind that much. As for situations where it is the woman who is seen to be the perpetrator of the affair the situation differs in that the men involved are expected to resolve the situation quickly. As mentioned in several cases where this had happened and the affairs resulted in pregnancies, the affair was ended as soon as the pregnancy was known, and the children raised by the original partner.

Another example was a long standing affair between Shirley and Paul, this was open to everyone with Paul sitting with and buying Shirley's partner Sid drinks. Initially people were confused about this, which turned to anger openly deriding Sid; especially when he was playing dominoes. As Paul explained that Sid 'had gone off it' and 'only has a small one so can't make her cum' people began to accept the situation more. The situation was finally settled when Sid explained that all he wanted 'was someone to look after the house and to wake up with'. Sid's inability to provide for Shirley sexually and his need for domestic and emotional comfort means an explanation for the affair is acceptable.

But the situation differed when one of the women-Andrea- was openly having an affair with a man in another pub. An argument broke out one afternoon when Andrea returned from seeing the other man and demanded that her partner, Lucky, buy her a drink. Lucky was sat with Fred and Janet; Janet was looking after Carol, Lucky and Andrea's daughter who has a severe learning disability.²⁵ Lucky began to complain that if Andrea was settling in for a double brandy session she could 'fuck off', this was her cue to start an argument about him drinking every day and coming home drunk every night:

Lucky: Fuck off back to him then

Andrea: What and leave you to piss your money up the wall no way you've got to look after both of us ya bastard

²⁵ I want to note that there are a few people and children in the pub who have moderate to severe learning disabilities as is said 'it just is'.

Janet: aye that aint fair 'e looks after you both

Andrea; look at 'im 'es pissed

Fred: So are you

Janet: Don't make scene in front of the bab

Andrea: It's 'im look at 'im

Janet: Just leave it now

Andrea; I aint 'avin' 'im piss it all up the wall

Fred: 'es just bought you a new car wot you on about you went abroad twice last year the bab never goes without anything anyway it's 'is money

Janet: You want it all ways you you don't want for anything ya don't know you're born

Andrea: Look what I 'ave to put up with

Fred: What you on about you've been out with that bastard all afternoon you should be ashamed.

I want to discuss this particular example for several reasons. The most obvious though not spoken about directly is that Carol is Lucky's daughter from an affair with Andrea whose husband, as is fairly usual, chose to raise Carol as his own so long as the affair finished. They were 'giving it a go' when Andrea's husband died fifteen years later, Lucky moved in with Andrea and Carol and took over responsibility; if only economic, for them. This is known in the pub, not that notable for many, but what is noted by people is that Andrea continued an affair with 'another man' with whom she started a relationship after she ended the relationship with Lucky whilst in the early stages of 'giving it a go' with her husband. Andrea 'wants it all ways', she wants to continue her affair but be blatant not just keep it as a bit of fun, make Lucky economically responsible for her and Carol, and moan about him 'pissing his money up the wall'. Obviously maintaining the idea of monogamy by the closure of Andrea and Lucky's affair aligns with pub ideology of sexual relationships.

Love the one you're with?

Flirting is to do with being coy, soft, attentive, laughing at jokes, conversely being out about your sexual desires can undermine the idea of a long term relationship, but it is OK for a one night fling. The dichotomy of women wanting, knowing and men being scared, but needing to feel in control is rarely addressed.

Wight's (1994) work on working class boys in Glasgow thoughts about sex addresses this point, to quote Wight:

'Slags' are girls or women who deviate from this norm, but there is not a clear boundary between 'decent girls' and 'slags', rather various graduations of inappropriate behaviour. The main criteria for girls to get labelled as 'cows', 'slags', 'dirties' etc. all involve a reputation of excessive sexuality: numerous different sexual partners, initiating sexual activity, or having a greater sexual appetite than one's boyfriend:

BI: She was like a wee slut, her.

DW: How do you mean?

BI: Wanting it all the time. Her ex-boyfriend was knackered every morning.

DW: And did you know that before you started going out with her?

BI: Aye, that's why I went out with her (1994: 705-706).

Talking with some of the single men they began to explain to me about 'fuck buddies'²⁶, when I asked some of the single women I found that having a fuck buddy was quite common. For the women in particular the idea of no strings attached sex was appealing. This was seen as allowing you a higher level of independence and meeting your sexual needs. It's on these occasions that I usually began to sound like someone's granny:

Poppy: yeah I've got my mate we've known each other since school, it's good, he just fucks off in the middle of the night

²⁶ A friend with whom you meet up to have sex with no intention to create a relationship, or monogamy.

Su: What no cuddle?

Poppy: You daft bat what you mean no cuddle silly cow, no I can get him to do things that Shenna's dad would never do its great then you haven't got him doing the trying to control ya thing

Su: But you don't know who else he's doin'

Poppy: I don't care who else he's doin' he don't care who I'm doin' it's just a good fuck.

Passivity in sexuality is missing from Poppy's description of sex with her 'fuck buddy', my questioning of her is based on the premise that she is being used sexually, her response is that she has control in the sexual encounters, it is not based on any presumption of relationship or monogamy, purely sexual fun. As Skeggs (1991: 130) advocates, 'female sexuality can, however be experienced as fun, empowering and pleasurable, and it is these contradictory aspects, which momentarily escape regulation'. Or, as Sheila was explaining to me one evening:

Sheila: You remember Peggy who used to live over the road from me

Su: yeah Pippa's's mom?

Sheila: Well you know she did a runner?

Su: yeah, with his credit cards and emptied the bank account

Sheila: Yeah Well she always said he was good and Sonja said he was good so I had him the other night, 'es fucking brilliant, thought I was gonna faint

Su: yeah but he's little

Sheila: Not where it counts, asking him round later with a bottle think I've got myself a fuck buddy. Sam's not too happy but he can fuck off if he don't like it.

Talking with the men showed a similar level of disassociation from usual rules of sexual appropriateness:

Mark: Yeah I've got this mate over Bear Green we've known each other years. Think I need to get one closer to home though too much travelling

Su: Well it's cheaper than paying for it

Mark: Fuck off I've never paid for sex in me life, she wants it I want it what's wrong with that?

Su: Not sure it would work for me, what not even a drink?

Mark: You're mad you are no wonder you're on your own, you wanna be careful it'll heal up if you don't use it soon.

To return to Pyke's (1996) study, she describes essentially a kind of hegemonic ideology that favour men's interests over women's that emerged in her interviews with divorced white women and men. First is the ubiquitous belief in an "essential" gender order. Notions of masculinity and femininity, and men's greater resources, status, and power relative to women, are seen as natural and inevitable. The omnirelevance of this belief in an "essential" gender order makes this a kind of master ideology, out of which subsidiary ideologies are spun that further obscure gender inequality (Pyke 1996). As has been argued in the chapter on class, the structural aspects of class and gender are difficult to avoid, and the essential gender order does promote a biological sexual drive in men that may be seen to give men power over women, especially taking into consideration narratives of male sexual violence against women, but having a fuck buddy may seem to challenge an essential nature of a gender order that promotes only a male drive for sex, the passive woman who needs to be coerced into sex is missing from the above examples, but still seems to be pervasive in the ideology of the pub. Working reflexively in this research, I have my experiences of growing up 'up the road' in the 1970's and within that discourse was an ideology of women needing to be coerced into sex, but also sex being a way of controlling women that I want to explore in the following section.

One evening Sheila and Sam were arguing and Sam was complaining about her being too snippy. He went into the lounge to play the machine and Sheila followed

him to continue the row. Mike began to shout over for them to 'shut the fuck up' as people were talking when Sheila decided to round on Mike and tell him to 'fuck off':

Mike: You need to sort 'er out you know

Carl: She needs a seeing to sort her out

Sam: Yeah you give it a go if you want to

Sheila: Yeah like that would happen give it a try

On the surface this can be viewed as a threat of violence; the usual idea of a woman 'needing a smack', but this statement aimed at Sam means that Sheila needs sex. Talking with Carl the next day I asked him about this as I had not heard this sort of conversation for years. Carl said that this was about a woman needing sex or needing a 'good hard fucking'. After blushing and laughing I asked him what the hell he was on about. He explained it was:

Carl: like in the jungle that when women get horny they get snippy and they need a good fuck to help them, its natural like animals women are more likely to ovulate if they are given a rough fuck so they wind men up by getting snippy to get the men going to get what they need then they calm down.

Su: Where dyou get that crap from?

Carl: The Discovery Channel

Su: I didn't know The Discovery Channel did porn what was this Discovery does spanking?

Carl: No it's like lions the male bites the back of the female's neck

Su: We're not lions you prat

Carl: No but you need a good seeing to sometimes to keep you in line, calm you down.

Su: Get lost Carl

Carl: Well you've needed a seeing to for ages.

Sam's relationship with the other men is difficult, he does not hold much status as Sheila is often seen to be out of control, swearing, drunk, generally a bad mother who doesn't keep a clean home. Here Sheila's awkwardness - being snippy - is used to deride Sam, that if a woman was becoming awkward, snippy or argumentative it was because Sam is not doing his job properly. What is interesting is Carl's use of a 'science' television programme to validate his point. This fundamentalist approach to sex explains some of the attitudes towards sexuality, a need as well as a desire that negates the responsibility of the person to basic animalistic need. What would the reverse of anthropomorphism be? As I mentioned earlier men are at risk of losing face if a woman ridicules a man's sexual performance, but also the omnirelevance of the sexual man is not only that they are driven by sexual desire, but they must perform well to satisfy the woman that the woman also has biological sex needs that men need to satisfy, if they do not women become 'snippy'. In the instance above the idea of snippy women leaves men open to criticism from other men by the very ideology; that of a basic biologically driven need; enforced in this instance with scientific 'fact', of both men and women but the man needs to perform in order to pacify the woman. What is of interest here is that women are presented as not aware of a desire to have sex making them 'awkward' again irrational; presumably being controlled by their hormones, yet the man recognises the situation.

Conclusion

In this sense, the hegemonic ideology of men dominating sexuality seems to hold true even though empirically there is evidence of women having some control of their sexuality even if this is masked with humour. Again, like class, the realities of gender and sexuality in the pub would seem to fit a pragmatic acceptance, in the margins woman's lives experienced differently to the way that the ideology and discourses of the pub; but more importantly general ideas of working class women, show as to challenge too strongly the doxa makes you vulnerable, there may be more power in terms of sexuality than is recognised but this is limited and still controlled by ideologies of respectability and maintaining monogamous heterosexual

relationships which as shown are vulnerable to criticism. Maintaining a relationship is seen as the power base for women, especially around raising children, but this is an area that makes women the most vulnerable, a dichotomy of preserving a relationship through providing a home raising children makes women economically vulnerable yet it is seen as the area where they have most power as I will discuss next in women and children.

Chapter Seven: The hand that rocks the cradle

Introduction

As this work predominantly looks at the lives and interaction of women in the pub it is inevitable that a large part of this work is about women and children as, with the exception of Diane, all the women have children. Children bond women together in the pub, a constant source of complaining, pride, irritation, general noise in the background and security of identity. But more than another aspect of gender, children expose you to state services and the 'classing gaze'. In the next two chapters I want to change the approach of this work a little, the interaction between women and their children shows perhaps most strongly the role of cultural and social capital in our lives and how this capital is not recognised, or is criticised and pathologised. In this sense I want the examples to exemplify our experiences, to let the field work speak for itself so I will draw more from direct examples rather than comparison with existing theory.

Having said I want this chapter to give provenance to experiences drawn from women and children's lives, I want to frame the following sections using Gillies' excellent concept of the role of emotional capital in working class women's lives. In 'Working class mothers and school life: exploring the role of emotional capital', (2006) Gillies outlines the clash of the expectations of institutions. Gillies focuses on schools but I extend this to wider institutions such as Health visitors etc., and situated meanings. Her work clearly outlines that the socially sanctioned parental models involve a form of emotional investment and intimacy that are sensible to middle class parents but; in contrast, working class parents are measured and criticised by these models:

working class parents and their children commonly experience school in terms of conflict and stress, requiring a different kind of emotional capital. For these mothers, emotional investments are focused on keeping their children safe, soothing feelings of failure and low self-worth, and challenging injustice. [her paper argues] that material and social contexts shape and

contain mothers' emotional commitments to their children and calls for a greater recognition of the contributions made by working class mothers in enabling their children to survive school. (Gillies. 2006. 281)

The statement of 'enabling' children to survive school is something that rings true in the lives of women and children in the pub and I would widen this to interactions with state agencies in general. Returning to the central themes of class as experience, of moral economy and pragmatic acceptance as outlined in chapter one, the relationship between women and their children and the state exposes the division and inequality that class creates in society. To return to Gillies:

how professional discourses around education and child development are grounded in middle class privilege, while working class mothers face challenges that necessitate alternative values, practices and emotions. (2006: 281)

So following on from the material earlier on the 'classing gaze', the pathologising of working class life, the moral judgements made about our lives and clearly the imposition of failure on being and insisting on remaining working class means that these interactions are perceived, if not always actualised, as condemning, and critical in nature. In essence you're doing it wrong, you are wrong. Having experienced this ourselves women act as a the buffer between their children and the critical gaze and actions of the state, but we take the brunt of policy issues; health initiatives such as breast is best campaign to deter women from bottle feeding, five a day to increase fruit and vegetables in the nation's diet, the move against consumption of high amounts of sugar, and the constant of behaviour policies and education achievement pressures in schools, whilst being blamed for the failure of our children and watching them being failed in a system that both promises and demands

progress and 'betterment' but does not either deliver or involve the majority of our children.

To give a perfect example of this one morning whilst I was writing this chapter I was at the local shop, and observed a good example of why the research method used in this study is so fitting, how reading the symbols gives you a different story, and a classic example of women and children on the estate. In the queue I was behind a young woman and her two children -a girl of about eight years and a boy of about six- they are not known me, we are on a nodding and smiling at each other acquaintance as we bump into each other in the shop regularly, usually at the end of the school day when women and children top up gas and electric, get fags and something for tea and usually sweets for the children. This group stood out to me as the children always had large bottles of pop each and a family size bar or bag of chocolate. As childhood obesity is a current moral and health panic, along with concerns for children's dental problems, I was aware of the horror this would induce in many health researchers, but I understand the reason for the extreme size of the chocolate and pop bottle. It makes more sense to buy the larger bars/bottles; as they are usually on offer, than to buy the smaller ones, and importantly I know that the mother is treating her children to something nice after surviving the school day. I was behind the woman in the queue, and thought it was strange that the kids were not in school at that time of the day, 12.30. Both of the children are well kitted out as if they were going to school, Disney character hat and scarf, padded coat with fur lined hood and cuffs, calf length boots medium heel over leggings for the girl. The boy has padded Cartoon Network coat, hat and scarf, school trousers and sensible black Velcro fastening trainer shoes, but neither has a school book bag. The cashier processes the items in the basket and talks with the young woman, as she is also shouting to the boy who keeps running off towards the door, as well as talking with the girl. This is a loud and purposely public interaction, £20 on the 'leccie' and £5 on the gas and a number 5 scratch card are asked for, the little boy wants one of the blue and silver jelly bean baubles-it was close to Christmas- off the stand by the tills, he's told no as they have the larger silver and black jelly bean baubles at home which

are better, the little girl is told to put her chocolate in the bag with her drink, but she starts to complain as she wants to eat her chocolate, she is told not to start playing up 'it's bad enough with 'im who can't stay in school for more than a few hours before 'e's sent 'ome for playing up', and she had 'already had sweets whilst shopping up the road' and 'she is supposed to be off school sick'. The young woman is letting people in the queue know why the kids are not in school, as well as admonishing the boy for his behaviour. The boy complains that he has no sweets; he is told if he had stayed in school he would have got sweets but he can't make more than a few hours before they send him home so he is not getting any.

The reason for giving this detailed account of a rather mundane example of local shopping is that it exemplifies public parenting or, more precisely, the need to show others you are a good mother - we are told why both aren't in school, the girl is off school sick. We know that the boy is in trouble at school and so is being punished by not getting sweets, a good mother. The symbolic capital of the clothes, referencing to 'better' baubles at home, she is providing and these children are well provided for. Also sweets are payment or rewards for staying in school, for surviving school. I have no way of knowing why the boy keeps getting sent home, but understand that the removal of the sweet reward is the woman's understandable and legitimate response to the problem. For me the boy seems like most of the boys on the estate of his age, full of energy running around the shop but not really pressing the boundaries of playing up, all the symbols are being shown that the children are provided for, I can read the symbols, the woman has a rapport with the children, they listen and she is not shouting, so what is happening between this family and the local school, and for me in light of this work what is continuing to happen between families and the local school, working class families and state institutions?

In order to explore this further I have decided to structure this section by first overviewing the general perception of responsibility and care of children or the role of 'mothering', then the relationship between the women/women with new babies

and Health visitors, ideologies of mothering and parenting, then to look at examples from schools and then what happens when things go wrong.

Mothering

Children and home are the woman's domain, care and discipline of children is held to be the role of the mother. For some this gender divide is the source of power for women, the home and the children being the realm of the woman. For most this is more pragmatic as relationships with the fathers do not last long. The insecurity of relationships being the main reason why women make sure houses are rented in their name, and men are not usually declared as living in the house when a woman is claiming benefits, as if/when the relationship breaks down the woman can secure the house if it is in her name, and there will not be a long wait processing a new claim making the family vulnerable to debt, bailiffs and financial hardship. The separation of women and men's lives is born out of practicality in some senses as the support structure that enables a lot of families to get along, if not survive, is available from other women and not always the men involved in your or your children's lives.

In the pub men and women tend to live separate leisure time by choice. An example of this being during one of the week-long wakes for a death in one of the larger estate families. At the funeral families sat/stood together even when partners were separated. The classic gender divide happens at the wake and this divide of the genders is often seen at events. During these events food is put on as a buffet. Women feed the younger children first, older children are in also in tow (so they can be monitored; so that they do not take the best of the food or only biscuits); the children get a selection of sandwiches, sausages, sausage rolls, cheese and pineapple on sticks and biscuits. Then the women collect the men's food, chicken legs, pork pie, black pudding, sausages, sausage rolls, sandwiches and pickles. Women then feed themselves. Once everyone has had a 'turn around' the table children are allowed to collect their own food, but the women will re-fill the men's plates. Towards the end of the night men will 'pick at bits' from the table. The feeding of your man and children is an important show of servicing at events. Not only do they have to be

dressed well they need to be looked after 'well'. This is a show of family, and as such it is imperative that your family is presented as functioning, looking good and behaving appropriately.

On the last day of the wake the men were in the bar, the women and children including males under sixteen, were in the family room. One man, Gary, was left with the women and children, and sat right at the end of the bench seat somewhat reminiscent of the baboon left on top of the mound to keep guard over the females and children whilst the other males are away.

I was playing the one of the quiz machines and some of the children joined in. I heard one of the women explain to Gary who I was, though he had met me regularly over the previous four years, 'that's Rosie's mom' and I was OK, and the kids liked me, and some of the kids often came to stay with me.

When the men came back from the bar they went to the other end of the family room to play pool, and Gary and the older boys went with them. The dynamic then changed, as the men started to go to the bar in the little lounge to collect drinks for the women, and themselves, and crisps and sweets for the kids.

One of the younger children lifted her packet of sweets up to one man that he might open them for her; instead he called out to one of the women to open it instead. As the child was then ignored by all, I opened them for her: I was nearest²⁷. None of the girls went down the male-end of the room, and the younger boys (under 11) were sent back to be with the women. Although in tradition of the wake families were together, enough time had passed for the divide between the women and the children to be reinstated.

²⁷ It is noticeable that if a child holds something out a woman or girl will take it without really noticing, men or the boys rarely do.

I have detailed this account as, although a particular event is taking place, a wake, which requires specific forms of behaviour and codes, these are daily codes and behaviours which are just amplified in this context there are there in the forefront and background of mundane daily life of the pub, just without a buffet.

Mothering and parenting

The general rough and tumble of day-to-day life in the pub may seem to some as poor or, at best, haphazard parenting, but this is an arguable point. It is pointless to analyse the obvious love that the group had for their children, or to try to attest to their genuine concern for their children's current and future well-being. Some women are acknowledged as not being particularly good mother's, but 'having a feel for the game' (Skeggs. 1997) which maintains their position in the group. For example, one evening Jordon was misbehaving, generally playing up as she wanted some crisps. Sheila would not buy her any so Jordon unusually decided to try her dad:

Sam: Sort her out will ya she's getting on my nerves

Sheila: Shut up you're not getting any

Jordon continued to whine at her dad

Sam: For fucks sake Sheila will you shut her up

Sheila: She aint listening to me [calls Jordon again] will you shut the fuck up

Sam: You've got to sort her out you've fucked up with all the others you've got to try and get it right with this one.

Sam had a valid point, at this stage three of Sheila's children had left home by the age of thirteen, subsequently Liam began running away from home aged eleven and left home aged thirteen. Though Sam is willing to accuse Sheila of bad parenting he was never willing to engage with his children in anyway, he was never prepared to parent in any other way than to pay bills. Sam's standing with the other men was low he was often ridiculed about his wife's behaviour, drunkenness, swearing, arguing

and poor parenting, to take on the role of disciplinarian or parent in a public space would have caused more loss of face than the embarrassment he was already in. This said there were a couple of men, noticeably Rich, who openly engaged with his children when at the pub. On one occasion Rich was talking at the bar with his brother in law when Tina called over 'Daddy she wants you' to her brother about the brother's toddler who was stood holding her arms up to her dad to be picked up. Rich turned around and picked the toddler up without breaking a sentence before he realised it wasn't his daughter.

But I was a parent in this space as well, my relationship with the people I was researching did cause problems for me, as a one of the group and ethical problems as a researcher. I may have been there with an anthropological interest in the interactions taking place, but my daughter was usually there as well, and at times I had different ideas about how children should be treated. There were times when I didn't agree with the way adults spoke to and behaved with the children. When it came to my own daughter I would intervene if she was spoken to or treated in a way I did not agree with. I could usually achieve this with humour, but it did create problems at times, not only did I have to maintain my commitment to my daughter and the values we hold²⁸, my daughter admittedly was a useful research tool, gave me access to a wider section of people in the pub through children playing together, but the choice to spend time in the pub was not always hers.

Though we share the immediate realities of most of the families we were with, single parent, low income, on and off benefits, my daughter, like myself, has differing life opportunities due to my education and wider social circle. We were not poverty tourists. I both choose and enjoy the area we live in and choose to meet with and enjoy the company of most of the people that live there. But I also both recognise and enjoy the opportunities that my education has given me, and recognise that how my daughter was raised, was heavily influenced by this.

²⁸ Values around self -education, reading, not having to be 'girlie' and non-violence.

As discussed in chapter two, there are problems with this type of research. Though I share similar experiences and cultural history with those around me, my experience and my daughter's, does differ from the group, our accents are slightly different. Rose has been encouraged to, and has a passion for reading and she was always used to talking with adults and expected adults to talk to her as a small adult. So there were differences in approaches to parenting between me and the group.

Some of these problems in differing approaches to mothering could be minor and slightly amusing such as the constant cry of adult to child of 'Stop fucking swearing'. Shouting was the main way that mothers dealt with their and other people's kids, slapping and smacking being rare. The monitoring of other mothers about how you dealt with your child works two ways, in some ways it is supportive in that the women are protective of each other when they know that you have reached the end of patience or tolerance with a child, but this also comes with the price of condemnation of each other. The other problem is more ethical. What do you do when things are happening that you really don't agree with which for me in the main ironically was presumption of gender behaviour from my daughter as discussed in chapter four.

Liver 'n' onions and wedding proposals

Children are usually referred to as the woman's baby or the woman's kids. In some instances the men defer the choice of having children to the woman, and they will financially support them while the relationship is ongoing, but children are the responsibility of the woman. Care of the woman in late pregnancy and early post-natal period falls to the women members of the family and the group, with some berating of the father, for example Celia's pregnancy with Shep.

In the pub there was a gender divide over this pregnancy; Shep did not want any more children as he had four children who were in their late teens with two different

women and he was in his early forties. Celia, however, being in her early twenties, wanted to have a child and wanted to leave home which a pregnancy might well guarantee. The group joked with Shep that if Celia wanted a child the only way he was going to stop her was by not having sex with her, as vasectomy was not an option for him. When Celia told people that she was pregnant some of the men were angry as they felt she had trapped him into another financial responsibility, some joked with Shep that he had been told and 'you should have kept it in your hand'. The women were pleased that Celia was getting her baby. A few days before Celia's due date we were sat outside and people were wishing Celia good luck with the birth and letting her know she would be OK:

Jane: If I don't see ya good luck you'll be OK it just hurts like fuck

General: Yeah good luck if we don't see you before

Shep: Yeah good luck if I don't see you before you'll be OK on your own

Jane: Shut up you're going to be there if I have to drag you

Shep: You'll have to catch me first

Jane: That won't be hard you'll be in here or [REDACTED] pissed up as usual

Shep: What else do you want there's nothing I can do I didn't want it anyway

Jane: You put it in there you can be there when it comes out then you can go back to being a useless fucker and let her get on with it.

When Celia phoned to say she was going into hospital as she had gone into labour, Shep was persuaded by Jane to go to the hospital for the birth, Coup went up the off licence and sent him off in a taxi with twelve cans of bitter and forty fags.

Shep came into the pub the next day to tell people Celia had 'had her baby a boy' half an hour after he had got there. I said to him that he'd cut that fine only just

getting there in time, he said 'All the others were hours having theirs, she had to do it quicker, mind you it had got more room to get out I suppose'. His previous experience did not match, having not been at those births he had no terms of reference to know that Celia had left it to the last chance to contact him at the pub to optimise the chances of him being co-erced into attending the birth.

The confusion here is that often women say that they had had children to cement a new relationship that having a child will encourage the man to stay even though there is evidence to the contrary. It would seem that there is credibility to be had through creating of, or becoming pregnant, but other than financial responsibility, most of the men regard children's well-being as being the woman's responsibility. This is where the importance of how children are dressed and behave becomes of value; one's standing as a woman in the community is partly judged by your ability to raise your children. This credibility is also given by the men, especially the father.

The relationship between Shep and Celia shows this well: A few months after the birth of Celia's baby, Shep came into the pub complaining that all he asked was for liver and onions for his tea, he wanted liver and onions like his mom²⁹ used to make. Arriving home, his meal was dry and Celia's explanation was not enough, it was not like his mom's food and 'what the fuck she doing, all I wanted was liver 'n onions'? In the next few months Celia began to bring the baby to the pub more, Celia dressed well, put on a little makeup, then began to arrange for her mother to baby sit so she and Shep could come to the pub on their own. The next pub party Shep asked Celia to marry him, explaining to the pub group that Celia was a 'good girl' and he wanted to be with her. Celia had successfully negotiated the transition into 'good mother' by as Karen stated 'offloading the babee on her mother', rather than joining the group of women and children she opted to prioritise the relationship looking after herself and looking good, which resulted in a marriage proposal so she had what she wanted, a baby and a potential wedding.

²⁹ A woman he had hated and threw her ashes in the gutter.

Hells Angels?

As all of the women in the group had children-except Diane, a large amount of time was spent talking about Health visitors and teachers. And as said children bring the gaze of the state to the family.

Talking with the younger women about their experiences with Health and Social services re: their pregnancies and children brought mixed responses. Most felt that their GP had been supportive as had their midwives, where there seems to be a break between most mothers and the state is with 'hells visitors':

Dawn: That bitch hell's visitor was around again today cos I didn't take 'er [the baby] to the clinic

Sheila: What [mentions health visitors name]

Dawn: Yep that's the one, says there's something wrong with her head

Su: What's wrong is that why you didn't go?

Sheila: You said last week she said something

Dawn: Yeah she says they want to look at her head properly cos they think those lumps on her head are something

Su: what lumps on her head where?

Sheila: She aint got no bumps what they on about?

Dawn: On her forehead, there on both sides

Sheila: What them where she looks like she's got horns growing? 'er dads got them she looks like 'er dad take a picture of 'im in and show 'em then tell them to sod off.

Dawn did not have the confidence to talk with the Health Visitor, her age and her class makes her vulnerable to 'getting it wrong' to not being a good mother. Dawn

resolved the situation through her GP with whom she had a greater sense of trust. The lumps were nothing, the baby just looked like her dad.

Younger mothers also perceive health services as being disapproving of their pregnancies and thus their children, wanting to talk to them about contraception or parenting skills, whilst not wanting to congratulate them or tell them how well they are doing:

Sally: She just keeps going on about her gaining weight and not gaining weight and going to get the injection as I forget to take me pill, but she's [the baby] alright aint she look at her?

As some of the younger women choose to breast feed whilst in the hospital; 'to shut 'em up' one of the problems that women talk the younger women through is babies loosing and gaining weight when they change from breast to bottle milk. All of the young women bottle feed their children from the earliest opportunity, when asked why, they look at me as if I'm mad:

Dawn: He wouldn't like the baby sucking round there, there his my boobs, it's not right is it, her then him, yuk.

Or as Karen explained they go more droopy don't they if you do that I don't want 'em all down there. This was an unusual comment from Karen as one of her main comments about her body was her 'droopy tits'.

Breasts are seen as sexual, not biological. There is another reason why bottle feeding is preferable and that is the paraphernalia that goes with it. Being able to display a range of goods associated with feeding your child is to be interpreted as providing. This is the same with clothes, children being taken to health clinic visits are dressed in their most expensive outfits, and bottle feeding paraphernalia is on display.

Unfortunately for the younger women these symbols are not always interpreted by the health visitors as the young women think they should be. This breakdown in

symbolic communication is a reason for a lack of trust between the two³⁰. Another reason is the information they receive from their mothers and the older women in the group literally makes more sense, as they have seen these women mothering and feeding so the practice and experience is there for them to engage with, to understand.

Older women with new babies tend to avoid contact with health visitors, usually doing the first few visits to clinics and then stopping contact, only attending the mandatory progress checks. When Sheila had her youngest child, Jordon, there was concern due to Jordon's low birth weight and slow progress to gain weight. Sheila originally didn't want to take her to the clinic as 'they are interfering' but as the Health Visitor kept coming to the house so she started to go.

Sheila: She's put no weight on again

Su: What they say?

Sheila: She should be gaining more by now, and she keeps twitching all the time

Karen: That's cos you kept getting pissed when you was carrying 'er

Sheila: I did with all the others they had no problems; she's like a little doll that's all

Karen: What you mean 'ad no problem your John was in intensive care and had to have an operation and your Liam's a little shit

Sheila: Well he's a little shit cos of his dad, the other ones were Ok though, they want to do some tests

³⁰ I must acknowledge here that health professional are themselves under pressure to promote breast feeding even when they consider the woman's right to choose bottle feeding as the mother's decision a right one.

Karen: You need to feed her more wake her up to feed her just cos she goes through the night doesn't mean she's not hungry, get 'er fed up, give 'er to me for the week I'll feed 'er up

Su: You don't wake a sleeping baby

Karen: Shut up Su that's cos yours never slept you always 'ad her on the tit, she's got to feed 'er up a bit.

The avoidance of health services is often due to not wanting to expose other areas of family life. The group was concerned for the baby because they were unsure if she had Foetal Alcohol Syndrome due to Sheila's heavy drinking during pregnancy. The offer to take the baby for a while was to concentrate on gaining weight not only to re-assure the clinic and avoid interference from other services, but to ascertain if the low weight gain was due to a non-responsive baby or just Sheila not feeding her enough. There was also a certain amount of disagreement with Sheila about how she was handling the problem and condemnation of her care for Jordon. Although Health visitors are to be avoided, care of the baby is paramount. Ideas about health visitors are premised by the idea that they are interfering, judgemental and misunderstanding of individual circumstances. Health visitors would not be approached if either the woman or the child was experiencing problems. This is a common theme with interaction with any state agencies especially those regarding children.

The reference to me always having my daughter 'on the tit' was a dig at the fact that I breast fed my daughter rather than bottle feeding her but had complained about the fact that as a baby she rarely slept. The perceived wisdom of bottle feeding is that not only do bottle fed babies gain weight more quickly so reach the centiles necessary to appease health visitors, make your baby look well fed and therefore well cared for, bottled milk fills them up more so they sleep better. But sometimes interaction with state services cannot be avoided as in a general

conversation about Hells visitors one afternoon Becky was telling people about a recent event:

Becky: When our Stacy was little you remember and that hells visitor said that she wasn't developing properly

Su: Well she was a little cow

Becky: Yeah she's just like 'er mom, so they got 'er into Forest View you remember and they said there was something wrong as she was still wetting herself

Su: Who did you see about that?

Becky: That Cameron³¹ he's alright he is, they were wondering if someone was fiddling with 'er I went mad, all them bloody meetings buses here there and everywhere , they had me playing in the sand with 'er and stuff like that, just sit there and nod keep 'em happy stupid sods don't know what they're on about

Su: But you've got a weak bladder aint ya, Miss Tenna Lady?

Becky: Yeah always have had, but remember they got me extra money for washing and bathing and a care allowance for getting up in the night to change 'er sheets Karen told me about

Su: So you won that one then

Nicky: yeah stupid sods.

Although a certain amount of contact with state agencies is seen as unavoidable, such as teachers, there is sense of gaining something from 'them' if you do engage with them. Becky having to have her daughter assessed as services felt that she was

³¹ Health visitor

not developing at an appropriate rate was of little concern to her as they were concentrating on the child's incontinence as an indicator of an underlying concern. Becky as a younger single parent knows that she is more exposed to 'the gaze' of state services, what is of greater concern here, and to herself, is that they did not listen when she explained her lack of concern, and understandable irritation, towards her daughter's continuing incontinence. Becky knew that her daughter has very likely inherited the same bladder condition that she has, her anger is justifiable and understandable that there was concern about her daughter's development being impaired due to emotional reasons, especially that the child may be the victim of sexual abuse. They were not listening to her as the mother, but imposing their own interpretation on the symptoms, Becky has no voice as the mother and her experiences have no currency with the Health visitors; other than Cameron.

One of the reasons in providing this example is the way unwanted interaction with health services is turned to her advantage. Becky talking with some of the other women, especially Karen, she is told that she can use their authority as health visitors to validate a claim for money due to her daughter's incontinence. Incontinence she thought was something that just had to 'put up with' as she had the same problem as a child, not something that could gain her extra money. The game playing strategy is that if they are concerned and 'interfering' then get something out of it.

School

School is understandably the most consistent source of interaction that women have with the state and exposes them to the most symbolic violence. A child starting school is greeted with some relief by women as it not only allows the women some freedom in the day, but has financial benefits. The availability of breakfast clubs and free school meals should not be underestimated; but also this can be seen in the increased financial burden placed on families during the holidays.

The criticism that school is viewed as childcare by most parents is not without some truth, but needs to be understood in context. People initially buy into the idea of

education that children will benefit from school, ambivalence and even in some cases hostility occurs when it seems that the school or teacher is criticising their child and the child's experience begins to replicate the parent's experience and as stated at the beginning school is a place to survive and part of mothering is not only to protect your child but again to buffer them from the institution. The level of ambivalence reflects not only people's own experiences of school, but is increased by a perception of schools not understanding the behaviour and attitudes of the children, especially boys, as will be discussed later, and the intrusion into people's lives through activities and school initiatives. What may seem as putting policy into action and often well-meaning initiatives can often be seen as intrusive criticism. This section will outline some of the initiatives in the local school during the study time. Being in an area of recognised poverty with the required amount of children on free school meals the school was part of trialling 'Breakfast Club' where children could arrive at school early and receive a free breakfast. This was welcomed by most of the mothers, 'gets 'em out of the 'ouse earlier I can get on with me 'ousework' (Nicky). People also generally welcomed the idea that a breakfast made the children more attentive in school, more likely to learn. Where this began to fall down was the breakfast that was being served:

Sheila: Our Liam don't wanna go anymore told 'im 'es got to

Nicky: Mine don't like it either

Su: Why?

Nicky: Its toast

Sheila: Cereal an' toast

Karen: thought it was just toast

Sheila: Nah that's why Liam don't want to go he don't like cornflakes and they don't put sugar out for 'em

Karen: Get 'im some of them little sachets from McDonald's sneak 'em in.

Sheila: Bet they would take 'em off 'im contraband sugar!

To emphasis this is a good policy reflecting the needs of many children who do not get breakfast before school, but also the children in this study are used to a sugar in their diet; especially cereal, and will reject food that is not like home. Trying to provide healthy food and change the palates of children did not work in this case as the children just stopped going to breakfast club.

Not long after the Breakfast club trial the government began to introduce the 'five a day' initiative to encourage people to increase their intake of fruit and vegetables, some schools were targeted to pilot a free fruit in schools initiative to encourage children to eat fresh fruit. In principle the idea being that by educating children's minds and palates towards fruit they would encourage their parents to buy more fruit, a sort of pester power. The local school was one of the schools involved in this:

Nicky: Our Stewie came home with an apple today

Sheila: Yeah Jordon did as well, she don't like 'em though

Nicky : Na nor does Stewie so I gave it to Poppy, what they doing that for then Su?

Su: The government want to encourage people to eat more fruit and veg, so if they give it away at schools they think the kids will want to eat more and we'll buy it.

Nicky: Why would I buy it if they're giving it away at school?

Su: Dunno

Sheila: They think we're stupid don't they.

A rationality and logic that reflects the experience of low budget living, possibly not anticipated by the agencies behind the scheme. Health promotion schemes are one of the most obvious, healthy living being part of the citizenship education initiative

meant that the children began to 'nag' mothers about smoking, except the children who smoked, though the healthy eating initiative had little or no impact. For the women this was seen as 'stupid' as 'them' wanting to tell them what to do with little understanding of their lives:

Nicky: Our Stewie's in the assembly on Friday he's a carrot, he has to say 'eat me cooked or raw I'm tasty and good for you' poor sod.

Poppy: Bet he loves that have you gorra paint him orange?

Nicky: Fuck off Poppy, it's part of their Be Healthy be Happy project load of crap that is went up the shop the other day you seen the price of veg in there went to the high street and that wern't much better,

Poppy: It's cheaper on the market

Nicky: Yeah but you gorra get into town then lug it all back.

This discussion between Nicky and Poppy is representative of so many of the conversations about state agencies the consensus being that representatives of these agencies were by and large stupid with no understanding of what the 'real world' was like or that they were 'sticking their noses in. These assumptions are based in the realities of the women and children in the pub who are used to being told to do things differently, generally a feeling of being scrutinised and getting it wrong. But everyone else around you is doing the same, as in the case outlined above there are practical problems with increasing the amount of fruit and veg in your diet, as there is no reason to change the way things have been done why change and the advice is side-lined. This is particularly true with schools where advice is dismissed and as easily thrown away as the leaflet from school. There is suspicion from the women that initiatives in school are not part of the child's education, but an attempt to interfere, or as people say, 'they just trying to poke their noses in'.

An interesting example was the local schools involvement in the use of the class teddy and his diary (Haldar & Waerdahl, 2009). This lasted for a few years as the children went through reception class. The idea was that each reception class had a teddy, and each child would have the opportunity to take teddy home for the night and the parents would write in teddy's diary what the child and teddy did when they got home, what he had for tea, what they did after tea, what time he went to bed, got up and had for breakfast. The children loved bringing teddy home as it made them feel special; they were the one chosen for that night. The first time teddy and his diary came into the pub; Mary gave me the diary to me asking if I knew anything about it, which at that time I didn't:

Mary: look through that just look what they're up to now

Su: Wha?

Mary: The fucking school a fucking diary the snooping bastards coming 'ome with teddy teddy the fucking snooping spy is this social services or what?

Su: Hang on let me have a read

Mary: Bloody Christine had 'im earlier in the week look what she said they did lying cow, 'cottage pie, peas and cabbage for tea then played football in the back garden with Daddy', yeah right which Daddy or was it uncle Daddy?

Su: So what you gonna put

Mary: Well I can't put Mommy picked me up from school we went to the pub and had chip shop for tea can I?

Su: Why not the teacher would very likely have to write went home with teacher opened a bottle of wine and spent the night trying to think what else she could do for a living.

Mary: That's her problem en it what they doing this for sticking their noses in agen.

For the women this was seen as a very obvious insidious attempt to investigate their children's home lives. Also, from the research ethics point of view, it had little sensitivity to the ability for everyone to look at what others had written which of course we did recognising the deliberate lies but also trying to decide if the entry was written by a child as, for a couple of the women who do not read or write, and all of us, literacy skills is a real concern. No educational value was perceived in bringing teddy home, it was viewed purely as the school sticking their noses into people's lives. The separation between school and home is viewed as sacrosanct, the 'teddy diary' crossed the line between school and home, perceived as a way of the school entering the home life and the life of the child, bringing the gaze of the state and criticism. The possibility that schools will involve Social Services is very real, as children develop their behaviour often becomes seen as a problem in school, sometimes this is recognised by the mothers, though not attributed to the children, especially if they are a boy.

Boys will be boys

One of the main problems for the boys was that the behaviour that was fostered in their lives was in conflict with what was expected of them at school. An ethnographic study of an infant's school in the North East by Skelton (2002) describe the challenge that exists between working class families and schools. Skelton focuses on how teachers in the school challenge boys 'disruptive behaviour' telling them that this is 'outside behaviour' and making reference to 'not caring what they do at home but they're not doing that in my classroom', but then giving children examples from the 'Champ' book such as don't be a wimp be a champ. Also that power relationships were used by teachers in order to maintain behaviour with teachers referring to the children needing to understand 'I'm the cock in this class room'. Asking children to

make this rather complex switch in identity from behaving like a boy in some situations and not in others was particularly difficult for the boys.

Mary's son Ben is the fourth child of five and used to fighting with his siblings. At the time of this example Ben was 6 and at the local infants school, Ben constantly wore his coat secured round his neck 'like Batman's cape' running around the room and garden being Batman. One afternoon after school Ben came through to the children's room on his way home from school with Mary and his siblings:

Su: Whats up with Ben?

Mary: 'es in trouble at school agen for fighting

Su: Ben come 'ere bab wots up wots goin' on?

Sheila: It's that bitch Jackie should't be a dinner lady 'er she 'ates kids

Mary: The 'ed teacher says she thinks 'es got that ADHD or whatever it is she's only sayin that cos 'es left 'anded and she don't want to 'ave a go at the other kids

Su: Wot appened bab?

Ben: It aint fair we was playin and Carl an' Liam were pickin on me mates so I told 'em and they didn't stop then they grabbed Joe and they 'it 'im so I flew in and stopped 'em and 'er sent me to Mrs Cartwright and she said I couldn't go out next playtime.

Mary: it's not right is it e was only looking out for 'is mates and e gets into trouble wot about stopping the bigger kids picking on the little 'uns

Sheila: You did the right thing you gorra look after your mates.

It turned out that Ben didn't just hit the other boys he 'layed into them' causing some small injuries that the other boy's parents didn't pursue due to not wanting to lose face.

The common theme is developing: Firstly a moral code; looking after mates, Ben's actions in defending his friend's against the older boys not only justifies any violence a certain amount of pride in Ben being able to take on two older boys, and the rejection of Ben's understanding in looking after his mates when no adult was intervening and the school/head teacher's perception of Aaron having ADHD.

Voicing of inequality in school for the white boys was common, generally there was a sense of powerlessness between the mothers and the school, and this was often voiced in special privileges being given to Muslim children people thinking that Muslim boys were never kept in at break time or sent home from school for bad behaviour as the school was afraid of accusations of racism. The rejection of boys and their behaviour from school is clearly seen around school inspection time:

Lorraine: Our Anthony came home with a note today from school

Sheila: He went today I thought he wasn't going?

Lorraine: Yeah the educational social worker got 'im one of those limited time table things that Karen told me about, guess what they don't want him to go in next week he can 'study from home' cheeky sods.

Sheila: They gotta an inspection then? They did that with our John they get all the difficult kids out so they don't play up

Lorraine: It don't make sense I fight like hell to get 'im to go then they give 'im the week off.

Karen: Remember last year when they kept suspending our Kelvin for not going in, they're mad.

A problem occurred for some of the women when their boys were excluded from school during lunch time for misbehaving. At first, a couple of the women had gone in to complain that this was unfair as it meant that they had to collect their kids every lunch time. It was explained to them that there was no staff available or willing to supervise the boys in isolation during this time, and that they could not behave in

the playground. The women pointed out that the boys were on free school meals so what was 'the school going to do about that?' A packed lunch was provided.

I went down to meet with them one lunch time as the boys were brought in to the pub; which is only a few doors down from the school, to save 'them having to sit out in the cold'. The boys had been given a sandwich, an apple, a 'cup drink'³² and a yoghurt but no spoon. Talking through this with the women they felt that their boys were being treated like animals, just get rid of them and not even give them a spoon for the yoghurt:

Nicky: But it aint right it aint 'im, well it aint just 'im it's those bloody Muslim lads as well they never get in trouble the school never does anything about them they can't do anything wrong it's not right that schools scared of standing up to 'em [Muslim parents] in case they get into trouble.

Karen: Its boys being boys innit boys fight your never gonna stop that its natural give 'em a stick and they make it a gun or 'it each other with it.

I asked about how they were going to get their kids back into to school for lunch breaks? The consensus was that were going to have to talk with the head and say sorry and say they would make the boys behave but it wasn't fair. It is a common theme for people to refer to the natural when referring to any form of violence, that boys are just like that, 'es a boy, boys will be boys is used to explain away all male on male violence, nearly all boys behaviour is explained away by them being 'a boy'.

I was listening to Para Pete (PP) one day talking about his twin boys. PP had paid for home tutoring for his twins boys in preparation for Grammar school entrance exam. The one boy did not get a place a Grammar school. PP was explaining that he was proud of the boy who had gained a grammar school place and his other son would go in the Army when he left school:

Su: Bit early to decide that for him ain't it?

³² Cheap squash

PP: Best thing that ever happened to me, the army taught me to read and write, gave me a skill

Paul: What beating people up?

PP: He needs to toughen up, he's not good with books he'll get a skill it's a good life.³³

Reflecting back on their own experiences of school the men usually only refer to their positive experiences as the friendships they made, school was a negative experience and all talk of their education starting when they left school. The contradictory statement of 'school being the best days of your life' is always understood as it was getting to hang out with your friends and not having to work or pay bills, learning how far you can push things without getting into trouble, not to with the academic educational aspect of school.

Born to be wild

The antipathy between the kids and school is understandable. The feeling of having little or no control over what happens within school affects the way they perceive school. They identify with a school identity in terms of being with their mates, and a school identity in the almost tribal sense in identifying themselves with the school group against other schools. Most of the boys had rejected the idea of formal education by their second year of secondary school. This is not to say that they reject schooling completely as they have teachers and subjects that they engage with and enjoy. Listening to them they are rejecting the institution of school, seeing it as a place where they're not understood but merely controlled. These general feelings are mirrored by the women. Education as a concept is seen as important. For the girls though they tend to subscribe to promises of education for longer seeing finishing school and getting GCSE's as important, recognising that getting a job with no qualification is difficult.

³³ In fact the boy who did not go to grammar school achieved better GCSE grades than his brother and went on to do an apprenticeship as a mechanic.

Talking with Becky one afternoon I asked how Amy had got on in her SATs as I knew the results had been released that day:

Becky: They didn't put Amy in

Su: Why cos of the pressure?

Becky: I told ya her teacher said she wouldn't get through, same as they did with Katie

Su: But Katie's doing OK at [names senior school]

Becky: Yeah it's them tables aint it they think the kids will fail so they'll [the school] fail the place is a dump it's not the kids fault

Sheila: They did that with our Liam, said he was clever but didn't put 'im for the tests it's when they were in special measures and they didn't want low scores

Su: That's not right for the kids

Becky: They don't care do they our Katie cried that's when she started not wanting to go to school, thought she was thicker than her mates.

Excluding children from some aspects of school life reinforces the sense of not only detachment from the school as an institution, but also from the idea of education. Talking with Katie in the pub garden one evening talk turned to her recently starting senior school and inevitably; in the way that adult conversations do with children, turned to what she wanted to do when she left school:

Katie: I want to get married and have kids like mom³⁴

Su: Yeah but you don't want to get married straight away there's a couple of years between leaving and getting married.

Katie: I dunno work with kids I s'pose

³⁴ Her mom never married, her father left them when her mother was 6months pregnant with Amy.

Su: You draw really well perhaps you could do something with that, go to Art College?

Katie: Yeah but college and that I don't know if they would have me, I could work with kids

Su: Well your mom did her NVQ childcare

Katie: Yeah I know but all that writing Ms Garner said my writings no good.

Katie's understanding of her future is clearly based on not only what the women around her do, but also she sees her options as limited by how her skills are viewed by her school. For some of the girls the women promote going to college as well: Kelly: 'I want our Kirsty to go to college she likes kids'. Most of the girls throughout the time of the study who did finish secondary school and GCSE's, and did go to college, they went on to do child care or hair and beauty courses. This is by no means to belittle the courses chosen or the courses themselves, it is the amount of girls who choose these courses that begs a question, to what extent are the girls making choices and to what extent are they being streamed towards certain courses³⁵

When things go wrong

I will finish this chapter by reinforcing the point of children being disappointed, let down by state agencies, especially schools with an example that happened just as I was finishing writing that concerns the same Amy mentioned earlier. I began asking Frank and Gaynor, Amy's grandparents, about how Amy was getting on at school. Initially the report was that Amy was going to be a teacher as she is clever and good with kids. Some months later Amy was going to train to be a classroom assistant as she is clever and is good with kids. Towards the start of her exams Amy was going to study an NVQ in childcare as she is clever and good with kids. Amy got one C grade in

³⁵ I remember doing teaching practice as part of my PGCE working with a group of young women who were on a combination of care courses. All except a handful spoke of being 'dumped' into care work and courses as they couldn't get onto anything else or there was no work available to them. The general consensus was that they weren't good enough for anything else.

her GCSE's, unfortunately not in either Maths or English so could not start an NVQ course. When the results were announced there were various parents who could not understand why the school had led them to believe that their child would get the qualifications to go to college, having invested emotional energy and time in supporting their daughters for them to 'fail' re-enforcing their initial mistrust of the system and the school. A point I will continue in the next chapter.

The previous chapter outlined how by and large working class women's lives become shaped by our children. Our children bring us into contact with state agencies and the classing gaze, our role as mothers define us not only by state agencies but in this instance people on the estate and in the pub and raising of children is mainly our responsibility. I have emphasised what might seem a rather rough and tumble somewhat haphazard approach to parenting in the pub but also as with all areas things do go wrong instances where social services do have to become involved. There were three such instances during the study which were approached and handled differently by the group and the pub in general generally because of the nature of the circumstances and the place of the women in the group and the pub. One of the women I was closest to and had most contact with their children was Sheila. As we are close, it was usually me who went with Sheila to all school, social services and medical appointments with her son Liam. Liam began running away from home when he was about eight. Luckily he had a limited number of places to go so was soon found, usually on Sheila's way home from the pub. In time he became more troublesome at school. When I talked about what was happening he told me that he liked school, liked his teacher and his mates and liked most of his classes, he just 'got bored'. When the head teacher 'summoned' Sheila into to school to discuss Liam's behaviour I went with Sheila to see the head teacher who explained that all the staff liked Liam but his behaviour meant he was difficult to control in the classroom:

Sheila: Yeah he's a real boy he's going through that stage

Head: Well it's a bit more than that he's aggressive and disruptive

Sheila: Boys are like that though aint they?

Head: well its more than that he walks in and out of class when he feels like it.

Su: What does he say at school about why he does what he does?

Head: He just says he doesn't like it so he goes

Su: Yeah that's what he says to me, he says he likes school and the teachers and his classes but he gets bored, how does he mix with the other kids, does he have close friends?

Head: Not really he joins in with some games but prefers to stay with the playground supervisors or sit in the library on the computer at break times

Su: Is it structured activities he walks out on, do you think it might be an integration thing?

Sheila: No he's just a little shit he always has been he's like his dad

Head: He's a nice little boy really and he's so good with computers.

The head teacher's attempt to engage Sheila in a discussion about her son's behaviour is rejected by Sheila; my attempt to try and find out information about Liam's behaviour was taken by the head teacher and rejected by Sheila. I had over stepped my mark by trying to ascertain a pattern to Liam's behaviour bringing an outsider interpretation; 'is it an integration problem' so exposing Liam to the possibility of changing his behaviour. This would mean that Liam's behaviour was, and thus Sheila was under review. So Sheila has to interject quickly firmly placing the problem on Liam's father as the idea of him 'being a boy' had been rejected by myself and the head teacher, but as she attacks Liam the Head teacher is cornered into protecting Liam so Sheila regains the situation, a skill she had learned on many school visits. It was decided that Liam would go on a report/reward card to try to get him to settle in school. As we sat in the pub later we talked about the meeting,

Sheila talked about how they had tried all of this with Liam before and nothing worked and she had had enough and wanted Liam to go into care. As children going into care is not seen as acceptable other than for cases of abuse or neglect, people offered suggestions of ways around the problem. It is common for children to go and live with family in their teens for a short time. This is usually as the child has become difficult and is disrupting the family life for younger children³⁶. It was suggested that Liam went to stay with Sheila's mother for a while to help him settle:

Sheila: She won't have him

Tracey: Why?

Sheila: Well she thinks he's a little shit as well and she had John and the twins at the same age and she said she won't do it agen, and I want Jordon to go there for the holidays and if she's got him she won't have 'er

Tina: Can't he go to your brother's?

Sheila: Na our Eileens got the little princes and anyway 'er house is all posh and he breaks doors in.

Liam solved the problem himself in some ways as he began to stay at different people's houses for a few weeks at a time, going home a couple of nights a month. He would move on as soon as he perceived that people were trying to put restrictions on him, or he was beginning to get on people's nerves, or if he was in trouble at school. He continued this for three years, and continued to come into the pub with whoever he was staying with to meet Kirsty, Sheila and Steve, his three older brothers did not come to the pub. His older brothers all left home before the age of fifteen. At eleven Liam decided to move in with the family of someone he knew at school. This was not taken well amongst the group as she was not well known to us and did not live on the estate.

Tina: So who is she?

³⁶ Historically this has a precedence in working class families, as adolescent children were often sent to stay with family members to get work or help out.

Sheila: Her names Jan, Sophie's mom

Tina: What, Barry's Sophie?

Sheila: Yep that's the one, the one that always wears leggings

Tina: I wondered where he [Liam] had gone I though he was with one of you, but that Barry's a bit weird en e?

Sheila: He's got arthrititis [arthritis is always pronounced arthrititis] and she's got 'im under the thumb that's why he picks the babee up

Tina: Well from what I saw of her he's more than under the thumb dow know how he gets out from under 'er and he can't be on top he'd bounce off

The emasculation of Barry as he picked his daughter up from school is in part to do with him not working, but also because he constantly picked his children up from school and so is seen to being 'under the thumb' as Jan rarely did. The reference to Jan's obesity, the wearing of leggings and Karen and Barry's sexual practices is a way of deriding Jan. Though as said, children do choose to spend time at other people's houses more and more as they get older, it is usually people who are known to the parent/s or members of the extended group, for Liam to choose to move in with someone unknown, raised suspicions.

Tina: Has she met him [Liam]

Sheila: Course she has you prat he's Sophie's mate

Tina: No I don't mean that I mean has she spent time with him does she know what he's like

Su: Yeah you know how lovely he can be for a couple of weeks before he decides to go off on one

Sheila: Well she'll learn wont 'er.

A few days later Jordon came home from school asking for Sheila to go into school to discuss Liam. When we went Jan had approached the school asking for the child benefit book for Liam to help with his keep. The head teacher suggested that social

services should be involved to achieve the best for Liam. This caused concern again amongst the group as meetings with social services were to be avoided at all costs, the fear of your children being taken into care is a real fear. Social workers are perceived as 'nosey, always sticking their noses in, most of 'em aint 'ad kids so they don't know what they're talking about', this caused fear for Sheila as she did not want to lose Liam's child benefit:

Tina: So you gonna go?

Sheila: I've gorru 'en I?

Tina: Well you better hope you don't get that Maz³⁷

Lorraine: God yeah she's a bitch

Su: Is that the one who was all over Jason's mom like a rash

Lorraine: Poor little sod he is, she's as mad as pants daft cow but she loves him, all that Maz done was upset her an' Jason, sent him to one of those after school activities things where they're supposed to make up for 'im not having a dad

Sheila: Our Liam went to one of them when he left Forest View³⁸ that was a waste of time as well he got to go on all these trips, go to the pictures and skating and that the other kids didn't do that so that wasn't fair, and he was still a little shit

Su: Why didn't you take the other kids out?

Sheila: Fuck off Su

³⁷ All of the doctors, health visitors and most of the local social workers in the area are known.

³⁸ A social services run nursery

Poppy: Go and talk to 'er [Jan] you don't want them lot around, aren't you still claiming for the twins?³⁹

Sheila: Yeah I know but I've had enough of 'im I can't handle 'im any more he wrecks the house, argues with Sam all the time I had to get a cricket bat to him the other morning to get him out of bed I just don't want 'im

Lorraine: Well it don't work like that you've got to get 'im back.

The concern here was that Sheila had lost control over Liam, in people's opinion she was not looking after him very well, but he still needed to be with his family, not only because it would expose her defrauding the benefits agency, but also as staying with the family is seen to be preferable to going into the care system. Mistrust of not only the care system but government agencies is the norm. This mistrust is driven by the experiences of the people in the group and the experiences they have heard from others. To have a child taken into care is to fail as a parent. But also to have a child go into care means that they will be damaged by the system. The system represents both neglect and misunderstanding of children. Also there is the issue here that for a child to go into care is to draw attention to how people are raising their children. I began to go to meetings with Sheila at social services department. These meetings were just between Sheila, Liam, Maz and me. These initial meetings were difficult as the often a family dealing with social services will agree to a discussed plan to enable the child to stay at/return home and as such Liam was sent for assessment for ADHD⁴⁰, and a monitoring plan was put in place. Liam's behaviour continued to be bad, and he left Jan's house and started his rounds of staying with people at the pub again. Social services agreed to move Liam to a school unit, at which point Liam returned home and then moved in with his older brothers so the situation was

³⁹ The twins had left home and stopped going to school at this point and were living with friends and working illegally, though Sheila was still claiming benefits for them.

⁴⁰ Several of the boys were sent for assessment for ADHD over the years as the school considered their behaviour 'disruptive.

resolved. In all the interactions with the head teacher and the social worker Sheila maintained her position that Liam's behaviour was because he is a boy, he is like his father. Although she would not take responsibility for Liam, she defended him; to his detriment, in that his behaviour was what a boy of his age does he, like his mom, does not have to take responsibility in the situation, but neither are the school or social services allowed to judge him on what he does.

Another example of the 'he's a boy' defence of children was with Nicky and her eldest son Ralph.

Nicky and I were walking down to the pub on afternoon when we saw a couple of the boys her son had been with a few nights before when he had been injured, Nicky asked where her son was to be told he had been 'lifted' ⁴¹about twenty minutes ago:

Nicky: why didn't you come and get me?

Canaan: I was gonna in a minute

Nicky: whats he done?

Canaan: We was at the bus stop that's got all the graffiti on it and the copper said we'd done it

Nicky: So why aint they got you an all?

Canaan: Cos Ralph was gobby so they took him

Nicky: Yeah you little shit like butter wouldn't melt where they took him?

Allegiances amongst the younger boys are strong, but the level of self-preservation comes into play. Canaan knew that he could rely on the friendship, but would not risk the wrath of Nicky fearing the possibility that Nicky would tell his mother, as it was him who had sprayed the bus stop.

⁴¹ Arrested or taken to the police station

When we arrived at the police station I was again asked to do the accent and information taking. Although Ralph had not been arrested they wanted to caution him about his behaviour. When we went to meet the officer involved Nicky knew him from Ralph's previous visits to the police station so Nicky was able to talk with him about Ralph being at that awkward age, just being a boy, and that she would sort him out as he was mixing with the wrong crowd. Interestingly, actions are ascribed to anything other than the boy's own personal responsibility; it is their age, their genetic make-up, them being like their father, their friends, the school, but never them and never the mother's fault. When back with the group the responsibility is placed on the boy himself, choosing the wrong mates, or in this case 'being a stupid sod for doing the bus stop'. This negligible approach to boy's being responsible for their own decisions and actions are used in most dealings with the state services. I never heard anyone take responsibility for the actions of their children, especially boys.

Some of the situations are far more serious. There was a situation where April's older daughter who lived independently accused April's present husband of sexually abusing her when she was younger. Threat and fear of child abuse is one of the main worries of all of the adults in the pub, with kids being told to keep away from a couple of men on the estate as they were thought to be 'kiddie fiddlers'. Police and Social Services became involved with April's two younger daughters. At first the women were very concerned, the girls were offered places to stay, but the situation became confused when April refused to 'kick him out' as all people said she should. But then April's husband denied he had done this to her daughter. The consensus amongst the whole pub, not just the group of women, was that even the suggestion of abuse would mean that you remove him, with the men offering to 'remove him and his knees'. April then started to come back into the pub with husband and the three daughters which confused people and so began a whispering campaign of 'well if he'd done it you wouldn't let him near them'. Social services intervened and said that the children had to be moved away from the father. April turned to the group for advice:

Sheila: chuck 'im out

April: They've said they'll take 'em into care if he don't go

Sheila: So fuckin chuck 'im out

April: He says he won't go it's his house I don't know

Sheila: Court order to stop 'im coming round, up the sosh on Monday to get emergency payment he's gorra go April.

April moved her and the girls in with her eldest son and refused any help from the group as she felt we were being unfair on her husband as she believed he was innocent. Slowly April began to be ostracised from the group as the consensus was that you protect your children, choose your child before a man any time. As mentioned before the unpredictability of relationships with men was a main reason for this as well as the child first ideology. The children were still looked after by the group, staying weekends and coming round for tea. Her side-lining in the group was completed when April began flirting and generally coming on to the men in the pub. She was seen to have let her children down, and then was behaving sexually when people considered she should be concentrating on looking after her kids; she was a 'bad mother'. April was slowly accepted back into the pub, though not the group, when her husband was jailed. After a few months she started a new relationship with a man known in the area but not a pub regular, over time they stopped coming to the pub, April told me that 'he doesn't feel comfortable in there'. There were several reasons he was not comfortable in the pub, he had no standing with the other men in the pub as April had lost face due to her behaviour when her husband was arrested, the women knew that he has erectile dysfunction so was known as 'droopey stewey' but didn't join in with joke so was ridiculed more, but also the reasons he did not 'feel comfortable' was that as a group of women we firmly told him our thoughts about his treatment of April's eldest daughter and the way he spoke to the children in general. Droopey Stewey constantly told the eldest of the two girls living with April that she could not have crisps as she was too fat, she was stupid, she was annoying. Now although all of the group agreed with the annoying

point she was still a child and needed protecting, April was spoken to on several occasions about why are you letting a man talk to your kid in that way, we spoke amongst ourselves affirming the idea that no man would ever speak to our children like that 'I don't care how good a fuck he might be he aint talking to my kids like that' "es Dropey Stewey so e aint even that'. April refused to acknowledge that Droopey Stewey was bullying her daughter, was making her feel bad about herself, especially after her father had just been jailed for child abuse she needed comfort and stability.

Another serious concern was Sonja's growing neglect of her daughter Alicia. Though all of the women drink, and drunkenness is a regular occurrence, there is a tolerance level for prolonged drunken behaviour where children are involved. In the situation with Sonja, this was further exasperated by her sexual activity. Sonja had a series of violent relationships, which people attributed to her drinking. Concern began to grow about the safety of Alicia, as most people had stopped their children going to stay at Sonja's home as they did not feel their children were safe staying the night. The difficulty centred on how to remove Alicia from the situation as most people didn't want to take her in as she was a difficult child. 'She's a spoilt brat, always screaming you can't get 'er to do anything' or 'she just whines all the time, never shuts up I can't 'ave that it'd drive me mad'. Alternatively, people were reluctant to approach Social Services as they knew that Sonja would very likely lose Alicia, and if she went into the care system that would be even more detrimental than her current circumstances. When Sonja lost her job, her drinking increased. The group tried to encourage and then bully Sonja into cutting down her drinking. Some people began to distance themselves from Sonja. When we talked about what could be done it was suggested that if Alicia did go into care which one of us would it be who had cracked and reported 'anonymously'? The situation was resolved as Alicia was in after school care, the group began to refuse to go and collect or let their children collect Alicia from school. Sonja began to arrive late and drunk to collect Alicia, and one of the child care workers reported this to the head teacher who reported this to Social Services. Alicia was removed into the care of her maternal grandparents.

Condemnation was swift and harsh. Sonja had never been liked by the men in the pub due to her overtly sexual behaviour, drunkenness and swearing. For the women discussing Sonja became a way of highlighting her bad mothering skills, whilst asserting their attempts to help Alicia, Sonja was vilified for being the extreme of the behaviour that most women did.

Conclusion

Our lives in the group are often unstable, relationships and benefits are prone to change at any given time and are out of our control, we are responsible to state services for the lives of our children whilst also trying to maintain a loving and stable environment for them. Even though things go wrong the longevity of experience informed by our cultural capital maintains the way we raise our children even though some elements may seem, and can be argued are, wrong especially around violence.

Chapter Eight: 'A Few Beers, A Bag of Chips and a Fight' (Steve): Normalising Violence

The central theme of the thesis is the moral economy and cultural capital within white working class culture. Having looked at constructions of class, lived experience of class, gender, sexuality and the emotional capital involved in the raising of children I want to return to the difficult subject of violence.

I struggled both with writing this chapter and with the issue of whether to include a section on violence at all. As I have said, there is a constant undercurrent of violence, a potential for something to happen most of the time. I outlined in the chapter on masculinity and the chapter on women and children, hyper-masculinity and being able to look after yourself, are key to young male identity. The knowledge that men can be violent is central to young women learning an aspect of gender performance. Although violence is an almost constant possibility, it is a possibility which is rarely realised - in general, acts of violence of any form are not that common. In the years of the study, and all the years I have drunk in the pub, violence has been relatively uncommon, if you don't include drunken squabbles on a Friday or Saturday night. The pub may have a 'rough' feel. As mentioned, shouting is common and it is generally a loud place. But violence is a part of our lives, and I had to be reflexive about my difficulties in whether I should write about violence - am I not just following a stereo-type of representing working class life? Why do I want to ignore the violence? In following my desire to write without judgement, am I reluctant to highlight violence because of the almost inherent judgement which accompanies discussions of casual violence? Importantly, has this reluctance ended up with me being over-protective and romanticising the group? But violence is there both in the representation of working classness (particularly how men are represented), and the 'othering' of working class women because of violence, our children, and the relationship between the two.

Everything I have written about can be brought together in a chapter on violence, as violence is there - it is normalised and demarcates as different as violence is

rejected as a cultural norm in wider society. Seidler (1989) notes how violence is encoded in male bodily stance and Measor & Woods (1984) note how “macho posturing” involves charting out a code of acceptable practice: a masculine cultural blueprint. These processes contribute towards the institutionalisation of masculinities’ (Skeggs 1991: 129). This is certainly true of the pub, threat of violence and the experience of male violence cannot be discounted, it is there in the background, in how people stand and talk. Although violence may be an expected and accepted aspect of masculinity, it is the norm, the power that this has over the control of the women’s behaviour or attitudes towards the men is questionable. As aggression, put downs and derision are normalised in pub life, it would seem that women are complicit in male aggression, but again this is only part of the story. Normalised aggression and women’s sometimes avoidance of confrontation does not mean that they always comply, they have to choose and choice is what makes aggression a different story to tell in terms of violence in the pub.

Halson (1989), in discussing sex discrimination in schools, argues that in actually dealing with what is seen by the perpetrators to be ‘natural’ and ‘normal’ behaviour, the students become implicated in the normalisation of masculinity and the policing of their own behaviour (cf. Mahony 1989; Stanworth, 1981). Skeggs, however notes, *‘that the students refuse to be rendered powerless in this process. They are aware of the injustice and they fight back’* (Skeggs 1991: 129). Skeggs also notes how for students fighting back has limited value, and my research would conclude, on the surface, the same. However, the resistance to ‘overt’ masculinity is also important to note. Just as women have to be careful of excess in terms of sexuality or attempts at femininity, the same can be said at attempts to be too masculine will result in rejection or derision of the men by the women, ‘Don’t be a prat’ or ‘just try it’ are common lines used by women to men when they want to diffuse a situation, ridiculing the situation calling the bluff of the man as with the example between Emma, Jane, myself and Sulaman when Kirsty returned home. The point that all three of us had been hit before, we were aware of the danger Kirsty was in, and especially the need to make sure she did not leave with Sulaman since he was now

even more angry - not only had we stood up to him, Kirsty had, and none of the men were willing to support his demand that Kirsty needed to come home.

In order to understand attitudes towards violence, I will break this down into sections which can be overviewed with the context of normative approaches to violence. I start with a general overview of what people perceive as being allowable, so to speak, in the pub regarding violence, women and violence, boys and violence and (to follow the pattern of the previous chapter) what happens when things go wrong, when the normative understanding of violence is challenged.

Overview

Violence towards women, or the children, is not allowed and is dealt with swiftly and, if the violence is offered by an outsider, brutally. Yet there are levels of violence between the men and the women which are seen as part of life. Real threats of violence by men to women are not very common, most often they are in a joking/sexual way, however there are threats and then there are threats, and there is the ability to distinguish between the two. Threats can and do take on a joking value, or can be undermined by joke or banter; what to some who are outside the discourse would seem to be threatening would be taken as a 'joking' attempt to control women's (and sometimes men's) behaviour.

One of the most common put downs directed at women is 'you need a good smacking', or 'you keep asking for a good smacking and you'll get one'. The joking/sexual variant on the need for a smack is 'you need your arse smacked you do', or 'you're asking to get your arse smacked'. The latter is not just confined to relationships but is said by most of the men to the women in the group. The 'You need your arse slapping' comment is the more common than the non-sexual counterpart, and is no real threat of violence but rather a joking attempt to indicate that the woman is 'playing up' - doing or saying something to jibe the man. This of course can and does carry through to a more serious toned 'you need your arse slapping' when it is considered that the behaviour has gone too far. This forms part of the normal banter of the pub, and it could be interpreted as making the women

childlike, infantilised adults who can be controlled with a smack, but this interpretation is tenuous, as it does not work; the “threat” is, in fact, game play as the women would almost always turn it into a joke or sexual banter. The retort to ‘you need your arse slapping’ is usually ‘ooh yes please’; sexualisation, or ‘Like to see you try it’ disarming the threat, ‘I can/will fight back’. As I was single for the majority of the time of my fieldwork, it was commonly said to or of me that what I needed was my arse slapped as I had no man to keep me in line. This prompted a standing joke of ‘who would try to keep me in line’?

As was discussed in the sexuality chapter, on the surface it may seem that the men have a degree of power by sexualising situations, ‘they are not allowed to forget their sexual functions vis-à-vis men and the embodiment of positions of power/powerlessness that these contain’ (Dalley-Trim, 2009) but, to a degree the position of power is illusory, a paper tiger. Though the potential and the threat of violence are real, it is mainly kept at banter. One evening after Tina had beaten Shep in the last game of Poker there was the usual exchange of sexual banter, Shep commenting on the size of Tina’s bum and breasts, with Tina commenting on him only needing three fingers for a five finger hand shuffle. Shep turned to Rich and commented that ‘er [Tina, Rich’s wife] needs ‘er arse slapping’ to which Rich replied ‘She’d flippin floor me if I tried that’. The idea of, literally, the upper hand being maintained by the potential of violence is something that both genders appear superficially to adhere to, but is a complicated issue. Noting the complexity of the gendered relationship with violence is in no terms meant to undervalue the threat of violence that operates; as women, we live with fear of violence as a constant. When we are out and about we are vigilant of male presence, we regulate our behaviour by choosing routes for travel which will be safest, and we cross the road when we see men. We live in fear of violence from men, that is the way we have been taught and what we see; we teach our daughters to scan around for threats, but then to turn down their eyes when passing men in the street. The majority of violence towards

women comes from men who we either know or live with, and within the group most of us have experienced domestic violence⁴², and from and early on we teach girls to always keep enough money for a taxi in case they need to escape their partner. Unfortunately, in normalising violence, all of us in the pub are more often exposed to the outcomes and consequences of violence, and these in turn are normalised; if you didn't need stitches, were you really in a fight?

Women and violence

At the beginning of the study Sheila arrived every Sunday with a black eye. This situation was settled when the other women got fed up of the situation, she gave as good as she got, but eventually she reported Sam to the police the next time he hit her and he was taken into custody over-night. Talking with the group about this Sheila reported how Sam was furious about this, and she thought it was funny though she did feel for him, as she did not know that there had been a change of policing approach to domestic violence. A report of violence meant that the person reported was removed from the premises for a period of time, usually a night. Sam on the other hand talked about the experience as a 'piss take':

Sam: She always starts on a Saturday night, when she's pissed and been on the Brandy, we 'ave a go then I go and spend the night in the car with a load of cans. Although they continued to be violent towards each other, the fights were never that physical again.

One of the women tried to resolve consistent violent situations by hitting her husband around the back of the head with a piece of 4x4, it was a pub joke that if she killed him we would set up a 'Free the Pub 1' group. Recognising that the violence was heading towards being out of control people became more involved, and eventually rumour and non-acceptance of his violent behaviour settled the

⁴² I use domestic violence here as violence that occurs in a relationship.

violence. He was publically scolded and derided for his treatment of his wife, a modern day version of rough music.

The relationship between Brenda and Coop was recognised as being out of control at times but was treated as an irritant more because Brenda was as violent to Coup as he was to her, people not wanting to get involved:

Tina: See Brenda has another black eye

Su: Coup has a split lip his face is a mess

Jane: They're as bad as each other they bust the bar up last night we all had to go round to the little lounge to get a drink

Su: I know I cleaned it up this morning two broken stools blood splattered every where

Jane: It's when she's been on the vodka

Tina: It's anything they get off on it, any excuse they've always done it since they got together

Jane: One of 'em will kill the other one day

Tina: Their problem ennit.

It is a rather chilling approach to the realities of domestic violence but one that shows the weariness of people who are constantly violent to each other. The two of them are never barred for violence, there is no police intervention, and violence is seen as part of their relationship. The whole family are violent to each other as another time the bar furniture was broken up when Brenda was involved in a fight with two of her older daughters which did result in Brenda being asked to keep out for a month, violence amongst women not being as acceptable as that of men.

Bitch Fights

Violence between the older women is either vilified or frowned upon. It is not that women are not expected to be violent, as discussed in chapter six it is well known

that women are violent, it is under what circumstances violence is permissible and to what extent.

When Sonja attacked her daughter's father, none of the men helped separate them, the women only made sure Alicia was Ok, and Shirley asked if the man wanted any first aid for his bleeding face. Over the next few days discussions about her behaviour centred on the fact that she was not a good mother; no amount of makeup and good clothes would make her so. The level of her drinking and the fact that she had been violent in the children's room rendered her an unfeminine woman, a bad mother, not to be supported by the group as she attacked him, 'she started it, let 'er get on with it'. (Tina).

As discussed previously, caring for children is a demarcation of being a 'good woman', attacking your daughter's father in public is not being a good woman it shows lack of control and a lack of caring about not being a good mother. One weekend I was looking after Ben and Theresa; two of Mary's kids. Ben was playing outside and got involved in a fight where a young girl accidentally got bumped into and knocked over. Ben apologised but she told her dad. The girl and the man she was with were not known to group⁴³, The father came up to me and started shouting at me and pushing me against the bar telling me to sort my kid out, he then started to push Ben so I stood in-between him and Ben, shouting for him to leave Ben alone. A couple of the women started to shout at him to leave me and Ben alone, that kids fight, Ben had said sorry so that was enough, but the man was not interested. Two of the men came through from the small lounge, attracted by the shouting, and asked him what the hell he thought he was doing? He was told to leave me alone and to leave it. I was supported by both the men and the women as I did/do not act violently and I was sticking up for the boy. I had acted appropriately, whereas

⁴³ Weekends it was common for unknown men and children to be in the children's room. Having a large room and play facilities allowed men who had their kids for the weekend to have a drink whilst their children played.

threatening children and women is frowned upon, and certainly is not accepted from men outside of the pub community.

Where violence between women does tend to occur is between younger women arguing/fighting over men, or younger women and the mothers of their child/ren's father arguing/fighting. As discussed, the perception of the over-bearing working class woman may have some validity when it comes to their children. In the case of older boy children there is sometimes tension between the man's mother and the mother of the man's child/ren. A good example being an altercation between Ann, mother of Kieran, and Sally the mother of Kieran's daughter Polly. Both women were members of the group, though when together they tended to sit on the fringes of the group rather than together in the centre. One afternoon, an argument broke out between Ann and Sally regarding some clothes that Ann had bought for Polly. Ann thought that Sally was dressing Polly in too many boys' clothes (jeans with embroidered flowers), and asked what Sally was doing with the clothes that she had bought. The argument turned to Sally complaining that Kieran was not giving her enough money to keep Polly as he was spending too much money on beer and drugs, that he was always out and that he never took her out. The general theme of the argument was that Kieran worked hard and 'needed to cut loose' sometimes and she needed to stop being so idle and get her own money⁴⁴, and that criticism of her son was not acceptable. Ann slapped Sally's face and Sally turned a table full of drinks over Ann, after a scuffle they were separated by a group of the women. Kieran came into the room and had a go at Sally. This was explained away by Ann as Kieran was angry with Sally for attacking her, some of the women backed Sally as they considered Ann to be over-mothering Kieran, that the 'he's a boy' approach was too much considering his age (20), and that she now needed to listen to the complaints of his partner. Ann had to agree to accept Kieran as a man and accept that she could no longer explain away his behaviour as a boy. The discourse changed, and Ann was

⁴⁴ Sally did earn some money selling 'knock off' but this was not considered as income but as pin money

now explaining his behaviour as he 'does these things cos that's what men do'. Sally and Kieran split a few months later and they both returned to their parents.

'I'd rather be with you than anyone else, but if you make me mad...' (UB40)

Violence between teenage couples although frowned upon is acknowledged as part of growing up. The women in the group, although again protective of the younger women, did on occasions join with in blaming and ostracising the young woman if they felt that the girl had 'brought it on herself'. 'Bringing it on herself', as with most of the violence, is a complicated issue. As I have mentioned before girl children are raised to acknowledge the potential of violence from men from an early age, fighting with siblings and play mates that turns to, you do not fight with boys when they reach year five or six of school. If the girl has been warned that the boy has been violent before or is a 'prat' and she then gets hit, she will still be looked after, the level of support decreases with the amount of times she returns to the relationship and the violence re-occurs. How the individuals are viewed by the community has weight in the support they receive, an example being the relationship between Robyn and Gary.

Robyn and Gary had an off on relationship from the age of thirteen. At fifteen Robyn became pregnant, Gary was unhappy with this as he felt she had become pregnant to trap him into a permanent relationship. Although Gary was not liked by the men they found him some 'jobbing' work to be able to support the baby. After a year, Gary's cocaine habit became more noticeable and he began to 'run' for one of the drug dealers on a nearby estate. Support for Robyn increased in an attempt to get her to leave Gary as 'she could do better'; relationships are seen as tenuous. Robyn and the child left, and were supported emotionally and financially by her family and pub community. Robyn went round to their flat one day and found used condoms on the bed. Robyn and Gary were not in a relationship, but she felt that he was cheating on her as she did not know about this 'other woman'. She destroyed his furniture, CD collection and some of the windows. She came straight to the pub to ask someone to look after her daughter as she was going to get pissed. When

Gary came storming in later, he was advised to get out by a couple of the women as Robyn was drunk. Gary began shouting and threatening Robyn, he then went to grab the child off Karen who was looking after her in the room. This was not a wise move on the part of Gary, and having been told that if he came near the child again she, Karen, would lay him out, he then went back to shouting and threatening Robyn. Bill advised Gary that talking to the mother of his daughter like that was not a good idea, and to 'piss off somewhere else' talking quietly and all the time rolling a fag. Gary started shouting about what Robyn had done to his flat, Bill pointed out that we all knew and thought it was a good laugh and he had got off light, he'd got caught and so it was his own fault. Gary started shouting that Robyn needed a good slapping and moved towards her; the group split, one half taking the kids out the room, the other grabbing Robyn while a group of the men took Gary outside. It has to be noted that most of the men had been waiting for a valid reason to 'smack' Gary, drug dealing/taking is not tolerated (except marijuana) and the treatment of his daughter's mother was not considered acceptable. Having sex with other people was not the problem, being stupid enough to get caught reinforced his stupidity, and threatening your daughter's mother in front of the child is not condoned. The gendered relationships here in how the situation was dealt with gives an insight into threat and fear of violence. With the exception of Robyn none of us involved were scared of violence from Gary. The threat here was only valid to Robyn, his behaviour in terms of the treatment of Robyn as well as drug dealing angered all involved. Also his age meant that most of the women still considered him a child and so would have 'slapped him one'. There is obviously a dichotomy here between the 'boys will be boys' attitude to adolescent male behaviour, and his behaviour towards the mother of his daughter.

Talking with your fists

Instances of violence with older men are rare but early one evening the children's room was full when Sonija, Bert and Alicia, Sonija's daughter came in, with both adults already drunk. They both brought a drink, several of the younger children

went over to play with Alicia, and some of the women went and sat near Sonja to talk to her. An argument broke out between Sonja and Bert over whose turn it was to get a drink as Bert would not buy Sonja a drink if she was going to 'just sit and talk to your mates'. Sonja told Bert to get lost and go and sit with the men 'what you doing in here anyway sitting with us keeping an eye on me?' when Bert picked up a glass and smashed it in his own face. Blood and glass went all over the kids who were playing at the next table, the kids were grabbed and taken out the room to be kept safe and be checked, Sonja was grabbed by a couple of the women to stop her hitting Bert, a group of the men came in grabbed Bert and took him outside and 'gave him a good smack'. Bert was also hit the next time he came in the pub as the men from the bar heard about Bert endangering the children as well as being violent in front of the women and children. The rationality is that although a level of violence is 'usual' displays of violence in public are not acceptable in domestic relationships, and violence is not acceptable where women and children may get hurt, a strange form of chivalry.

'He don't want to grow up a puff' (Bob)

Fights between boys and girls are always dealt with in the same way. If a girl hits a boy the question is asked why she did it, was it warranted? If a boy hits a girl this is wrong and he is a 'poof'. When the girl reaches the age where her behaviour needs to become more feminine, then hitting boys is only OK if they hit you first, but soon becomes that you should not hit boys. For boys the rule that only 'poofs' hit girls remains static. The change in attitude towards girls hitting boys is not only about femininity, it is also a way of introducing the girls to the potential of male violence. For boys in the pub pushing, rough and tumble and fighting is part of how they are, if not expected, then encouraged to act.

There was an instance of two of the boys fighting one day where Pat, the father of the smaller boy Ferdi, was concerned to see his son 'held his own'. It was pointed out to Pat that the other boy was known for being a bully and taking 'things too far'.

When Ferdi gave in having been kicked in the face, the two fathers who were watching considered him to be a wimp and a poof, Pat being annoyed that he had given in⁴⁵. Talking with Pat later he talked of his concern for his son who he thought was too soft:

Pat: 'He needs to toughen up; they'll think he's a poof he gets his head kicked in by everybody. He's a streak of piss, got to toughen up'

Su: 'He's only a lad he's a good kid, Karl is a bully they want to kick him out of school he's always doin it his dad don't stop 'im he thinks it's funny'

Pat: 'You can say that but he has to toughen up or everyone will kick his head in'

Su: 'But he's a caring lad'

Pat: 'I know but he's got to learn to look after himself or 'ow is e gonna look after anybody?'

As outlined in the previous chapter and Skelton's work (2002) for some of the boys this becomes a problem at school where they get into trouble for fighting. For the boys themselves, this is confusing as they do not consider their behaviour to be unacceptable. The distinction is important; some of them fight as they enjoy it, for some of the boys (as in Ben's case in the previous chapter) they fight as they see this as looking after their friends, which for the men in the pub is an attribute to be encouraged.

The point of being able to look after yourself is central to the idea of masculinity for boys, 'if he can't look after 'imself 'ow is he gonna look after anybody'? Growing up being able to fight is status, and gives you identity amongst your peers and family; it is seen as part of a masculine working class male identity and distinguishes you, but

⁴⁵ Cuts bruises and so on are always sorted out by one of the women.

unfortunately ostracises you within the schooling system. The dichotomy (caused by being held to different ideals between home and school) leads to most boys disengaging with school to varying degrees from the age of about eight

As was discussed in the previous chapter behaviour that is appropriate and fostered in their home lives is seen as conflict in school (Skelton 2002) but the boys learn as they grow and move out of the pub to meet with friends in the local park makes them more vulnerable to violence.

As boys become older (about the age of eight) they tend to spend more time out of the house, popping into to the pub to get drinks and crisps. This leaves them vulnerable to getting into trouble, or becoming victims of violence from older boys. A certain level of scrapping is considered to be a rite of passage for boys: they need to be able to show that they are capable of fighting, that they are not 'poofs'. Where violence is considered to have gone too far is when police get involved or someone needs to go to hospital. General cuts and bruises are cared for in the pub / at home.

When Tracey's eldest son was involved in a fight, he was left unconscious, and Sheila and I went with Tracy to the hospital. Tracey asked for me to go as they needed a 'clear head', basically a person to do the talking. My role was to get medical information and to smooth over any problems. Due to the boy's age and Tracey's presence, there was only certain information available to me. Tracey told them that 'no she didn't want any police involvement; the boy told the staff that he didn't know who the other boys were'. Tracey explained that he was going through an 'acting out stage, it was his age, but she would talk with him'. The essence of these stories is always to refer to boys being boys and going through a difficult time, but more than anything it is normalised by the fact that they are boys.

Saturday Nights alright for fighting...: what happens when things go wrong?

As said older men do not get involved in violence often, and if they do, it is usually in protection of the women or the children, or territorial where people are stealing,

dealing drugs or generally causing problems on the estate. In this sense like most working class pubs, the community is largely self- policing. The most likely examples of violence are amongst youngsters.

Disputes amongst teenage boys are seen as part of growing up and explained away by girls, too much beer, or usually a combination of both. This is a continuation of the 'boys will be boys' ideology of childhood. As the group explain, they fight as kids, now as young men they fight, especially when there is a combination of beer and young women. Fights amongst this group predominantly took place in the bar. General scrapping amongst the teenagers was common, but on occasions was considered to have gone too far. The demarcation of 'having gone too far' was if either the level of violence had risen to a dangerous point (weapons being involved), a group attacking one person, or if the police or ambulance services had to become involved. On occasions, the older men get involved to stop them fighting, predominantly if the fight is inside, either the fight is stopped they are persuaded to calm down and pints are brought, or they pushed outside to get on with it. As said although teenagers fighting is normalised, it is normalised on certain conditions.

Some instances of even normalised violence do shock the pub. A group of the younger lads had 'been on the lash' all day for Kieran's 20th birthday. Though loud, they were tolerated in the bar as they were just drunk and stoned. Karl decided to join the women in the children's room where we were having an Anne Summers party, as he fancied a laugh. This was tolerated as Karl was well liked by the women 'a nice kid'. Returning to the bar he got into an argument with some new lads who had joined the party and a fight broke out. Karl was taken out the front by Toby and told to calm down and left to have a fag. When Toby went out to fetch Karl back in for a 'make-up pint' he found Karl unconscious and badly beaten in the road. A group of young men had given 'given him a beatin'" and kicked his head against the kerb. The illusion of the normalisation of young male violence was shattered. The normalisation of men fighting because they are young and drunk could be maintained within the pub, but outside Karl was exposed to the reality of young

male violence, it was not controllable. The pub was shocked by the level of violence meted out to Karl. The ambulance service had to become involved due to Karl being unconscious, the assailants had used glasses as weapons, and he was beaten by a group while alone⁴⁶. The rules had been broken, and what's more, he is a 'nice bloke' and (importantly) he was well known and respected within the pub and the estate. After much discussion, it was generally agreed that it must have been 'a bunch of Pakis who did this to him' (Toby), outsiders, it is implausible that anyone from the estate could have done this to him. Normalisation of young male violence works where it can be attributed to young men letting off steam when drunk, fighting over women; drunk or not, or being a 'prat and deserving it' boys being boys.

As none of these explanations were available in this situation it has to be 'outsiders', others, those who don't know the rules or code of conduct. This is part of the point of fracture for normalising violence, boy's behaviour causing problems for them in school can be explained away as the school and usually the teachers' problem, the call on nature as a way of explaining a propensity to violence, -'he's like 'is dad'- and (most importantly) 'boys will be boys' create and recreate a gender identity for these boys that is based on a need for a form of capital that some would argue is disappearing because it is becoming less and less tolerated by state institutions. The predominance of a particular form of hyper-masculinity is certainly being challenged, the hegemony of masculinity in this form is changing, however this form of masculinity still has capital and is still needed as the risk factor is too high to reject it completely.

Conclusion

It would be easy to draw comparisons between the brutal realities of economy and shrinking provision from the welfare state and the violence in culture in both the estate and the pub, but that does not really address the issues concerning the role of

⁴⁶ Karl was hospitalised but made a full recovery, and chose not to pursue legal action.

normalised violence in much of white working class culture; to quote the old joke, this is a life 'where men are men and so are the women'.

Violence does not define white working-class culture; it is an aspect, and an aspect that is contained and controlled within the norms and values of the group if not always within the norms of wider society. It is key, however, that even though the containing and rationalising of violence might be seen as unique to the pub, the estate, and working-class culture as a whole, the violence itself is not. Regarding violence in wider society the question is are not *all* women socialised into the threat of male violence? Do not middle class women recognise the downward gaze when passing men in the street, the choosing of routes that do not put you in danger, are not all women aware of the extent of domestic or intimate violence? According to House of Commons Briefing paper:

27.1% of women and 13.2% of men had experienced any domestic abuse since the age of 16. These figures were equivalent to an estimated 4.5 million female victims of domestic abuse and 2.2 million male victims between the ages of 16 and 59.

So the violence is not limited to working-class culture, but perhaps the normalisation is. In listening to the men talking about breaking the monotony of working on the line at the factory by filling gloves with screws and trying to hit someone on the other line with it, of playing jousting with the fork lift trucks on night shifts to relieve the boredom, the intent of the story is not the fact that people get hurt, (even though in one allegorical case of the jousting fork lifts a man was killed) the intent is to tell a funny story. What is often read as brutalism within white working class culture either falls in to the category of humour, or is accepted within 'as what you need to do'. The softer approach of the 'talking circle' (DFE report 2010) has no resonance for children at the pub, they understand the rules of the circle, and they know the correct words to say, however they also know that as far as they are concerned it doesn't work. The talking circle does not solve a problem as far

as they (and, as mentioned, their families) are concerned, whereas sticking up for yourself or your mates is a tried and tested method. The effectiveness of violence within working class culture is perhaps the most pertinent point to note when discussing the normalising of violence. As mentioned above, it is commonplace within the pub for arguments to move quickly to violence, which then (just as quickly) results in a handshake and a mutual pint. Unless there is a deep history underlying an encounter, the majority of fights are seen as a way of letting off steam – a letting of bad blood. I am in no way excusing levels of violence, but it could be argued that just as the living of gendered lives supports and reinforces the division of women and men's lives, the level of violence that is learned and perpetuated in working class lives does so because at some levels violence is looking after, a way of protecting each other that has worked in the culture of getting by. Pat's explanation of needing Ferdi to be able to look after himself 'or else how can he look after others' does not just include fighting, it is inclusive of the understanding of gendered roles, hyper-masculinity as described in chapter four, and is an aspect (but not the defining aspect) of white working class men. As argued throughout the thesis, if you move the lens you see that on some levels violent behaviour is a way of getting by, a way of solving problems, a performance and part of culture and capital rehearsed and known from generation to generation.

Conclusion: Making other: From underclass to Chav

I was down the pub listening to the conversations of the women I was with reflecting on how to conclude this thesis. It would seem that in setting out to write about gender and class that class has dominated the writing. This is something that I became increasingly aware of as I was writing- was I writing more about class as this was what was figuring more in my life within the pub, or as I was writing and beginning to see our lives through a different lens was it that class dominated as a way of making sense of what is happening? Yet the conversations remained pretty much the same as usual, the men were playing dominos at a table the other side of the room, others were playing pool or watching the horse racing or football a usual Saturday afternoon. The difference being there was no call for who has got phone credit as most of us have phone contracts now, it was a Saturday so there was no asking for or giving back of monies, and everyone was free of the bailiffs at the time. When I returned to the pub later on the night the people were in their usual groups, singing along with the karaoke then a fight nearly broke out between Cuop and a man- brought into the pub by one of Cuop and Brenda's daughters-in which the women interceded to get the unknown man out of the pub. Meanwhile Brenda and her daughters started fighting and were kicked out. So perhaps nothing really has changed and my original intention of examining gender and class through- 'Understand[ing] the social reality as different people see it and to demonstrate how their views shape the action which they take within that reality', Beck (1979, cited in Anderson et al, 2003:77) still has value and I have focused on class more as a way of understanding life in the pub and gender as an identity in the pub is predominantly informed by our class, but that our class experience, what we do is usually seen as wrong and needing to change as well as being vilified: "You know you're working class when your TV is bigger than your book case." (Rob Beckett - 21 August 2012, BBC Scotland News page website) Owen Jones (2011: 1) describes in *Chav's*

The Demonization of the White Working Class sitting with friends at a dinner Party when:

The conversation drifted to the topic of the moment, the credit crunch. Suddenly, one of the hosts tried to raise the mood by throwing in a light-hearted joke. 'It's sad that Woolworth's is closing. Where will all the chavs buy their Christmas presents?' Now, he was not someone who would consider himself to be a bigot... they were all open minded professionals...If a stranger had attended that evening and disgraced him or herself by bandying around a word like 'Paki' or 'poof', they would have found themselves swiftly ejected from the flat. But no one flinched at a joke about chavs shopping at Woolies.

When I first read this my reaction was very much: why are you surprised that the white working class are the acceptable butt of jokes? Replacing working class with chav is just the most recent incarnation of the upper and middle classes ridiculing the working class. To expand on this I remember visiting an office where a group of young white female researchers were discussing and laughing at some responses to literacy tests conducted with seven year olds, when a particular example was given as perhaps the most hilariously wrong answer found so far the lead researcher stated, 'well what do you expect they're from Heathwich'. My response was anger, though quiet anger. Heathwich is 3 miles from where I grew up and is a typical white working class area living with the economic deprivation that still exists from the collapse of heavy manufacturing industry in the 1980's. Heathwich is an area I know well, an area that mirrors where I grew up, and these are people like me you are talking about. But I said nothing. I said nothing although what I felt was outrage, and what I wanted to say was: how dare you say and think about these kids in this way, you should never be allowed near these kids with that sort of bigoted attitude. I said nothing as I had no voice to say what I felt and thought. Unlike Jones who was shocked that well educated Middle Class people could engage in such humour, I was not so much shocked I've met this attitude before, but I was angered, angered as I had no way of being able to challenge this without making myself seem the aggressor.

How could I challenge them? Take them through the arguments in Willis' (1975) *Why Working Class Kids Get Working Class Jobs*, evidence this with the effect of socio-economic deprivation on education, open a discussion on the cultural perceptions of working class families on the value of education, take them through my dissertation or just say 'Do you not think that statement is discriminative'? I have never heard class discrimination discussed in equal opportunities sessions about discrimination. The question is, how would I or the others have reacted if she had said what do you expect they are from Toxteth, or Wandsworth or Balsall Heath? If she had said 'what do you expect they're girls'? The answer may lie in the construction of white working class that is the 'chav'. Chavs are funny, stupid open to ridicule, but this perception of the white working class as chavs is damaging. The framing of the working class as the chav is damaging as it permeates the media as a perception of what it is to be white working class, the idea of the thick feckless white working classes who need to be dragged kicking and screaming away from watching *Jeremy Kyle* on their wide screen tellies in their trackie bottoms and Lizzie Duke jewellery to the nearest adult education class, nearest sexual health clinic, drug and alcohol rehab centre and job centre is an image that needs to be laid to rest. Of course, the image is based in some reality but this representation of a group that needs saving from its own hedonistic, stupid self-destructive nature is tired. But it does its job, it does the job of perpetuating an idea not only of the other to the middle class, of being different, of lacking aspiration taste and culture, these are the narratives describing a new working class in the pub, from under-class to chav.

As I have said there have clearly been important social, economic and political changes in both working-class and middle-class life in all classed societies over the last one hundred or so years, also changes in theorising class moving to the relational, rather than the substantive, manifestations of classed existence. In concluding this piece of work I want discuss what is respectably *say-able* about a given class, with what constitutes a 'common understanding' – (Lawler. 2005:429) in Bourdieu's terms, the realm of the doxic (1977). This is not a theoretical discussion of the creation of a group 'chav', more a discussion to bring together a contested

idea of culture; ideas of lack of culture, the move from the 'salt of the earth' narratives and descriptors of the working class to a group lacking aspiration and skill, the construction of the idea of a problematic working class that now frame the lives of the people in the pub. I then will move the discussion towards finalising how these descriptions of the problematic working class have been discussed in this work especially regarding sexuality, education and gender.

Poverty of aspiration and continuing lack

George Orwell, writing in the 1930s, famously declared 'the real secret of class distinctions in the West' could be summed up in 'four frightful words': '*the lower classes smell*' (cited in Lawler, 2005:429). What was at issue for Orwell was less literal smell (real or imagined) than what 'smell signifies – the alterity, for the middle classes, of working-class existence... It is at the very core of their subjectivity: their very selves are produced in opposition to 'the low' and the low cannot do anything but repulse them'(2005:429).

Today the working class smell in that the working class lack aspiration, are racist, are sexually promiscuous, are feckless, are 'too' and remain indifferent to education despite numerous differing approaches to address perceived barriers to learning. Culturally speaking, we smell. This is not simply a matter of cognition, it is bound to the opposite of middle-class *identity; the working class have become those too stupid to see the benefit of education, the racist, the feckless, the sexually immoral as a disparate group, but, more than anything, despite consecutive government's neo-liberal agendas of improvement the working class are still here. We morph. It is here that I want to conclude the discussion about the creation of the grouping working class as experienced by the people in the pub, having discussed the epistemological historical trajectory of what became working class and what it is to be working class, what informs the experience, we need to briefly examine the mediation of cultural exchange.*

This discourse of humiliation and chav is not new; it is the current version of discourses concerning those who are the deserving/un-deserving poor, a way of moving from discussions on the working class to the underclass to the chav. But it is

more than this, working class, though defined as separate from dominant middle-class culture, does in some sense include a romanticised notion of respectability that has disappeared mainly from common discourse. Ideas of respectability and working class are notions in tension- 'I would contend that the slippage from working-class to 'underclass' works to *drive out* the notion of 'respectability' from the poor altogether'. (Lawler. 2005:431) The working class are people who are defined in terms of lack, but also a group who are to blame for what is happening in their lives, lacking self-worth and aspiration. In such narratives, the decline of heavy industry – often seen as emblematic of working-class existence – is linked with a decline in the *worth* of the working class and the rise of new discourses of an underclass lacking in aspiration and culture. As Jones argues (2011:67):

Thatcherism aimed to separate the working-class communities most ravaged by the excesses of Thatcherism from everybody else. This was old fashioned divide- and rule. Those working-class communities that suffered most from Thatcher's ruinous class war were now herded into an 'underclass' whose poverty was supposedly self-inflicted.

The period of Thatcherism, and its continuing neo-liberal ideologies, of course, is widely recognised as the one of the most blatant self-declared attacks on the working class. At a time when industry was disappearing you see Thatcherism becoming at its most divisive, the availability of easier credit and right to buy schemes held the dream of advancement away from what 'your parents had' to your own home, cars, holidays and bigger teles. To return to Jones (2011:71):

[W]orking class communities who had been shattered by Thatcherism became the most disparaged. They were seen as the left-behinds, the remnants of an old world that had been trampled on by the inevitable march of history. There was to be no sympathy for them: on the contrary, they deserved to be caricatured and reviled.

An interesting point is not only the idea of a rational progress that cannot be avoided, it speaks of an idea of a group of people who have served their purpose, but who are not fit for purpose any longer, and the point of confusion for many class

theorists continuing to look for class consciousness (Savage.2001). Not only that, it summons representations of the group (in this case class) who can be disposed of; they were left behind representing everything that the march towards the future was leaving behind as it moved towards home ownership⁴⁷-about 40% of people in the pub own their house-, newer cars and more expensive holidays. The image of the old so called working class communities as that of the pit head was what we were told to run from, escape from, where the council decides what colour your front door is going to be. This as an argument that still exist in discourse for some people in the pub. Jack in particular not only holds onto the Thatcherite dream of self-dependency and prosperity, but has adopted the discourse of class hatred to support it, declaring that most people in the pub 'don't deserve to breath' as 'they're nothing but scum' - this assault being aimed at anyone who depends on benefits and is not working, as Jones says: 'From salt of the earth to scum of the earth. This is the legacy of Thatcherism-the demonisation of everything associated with the working classes. (Jones 2011.72) But within the group in the pub as well narratives of lack are used as descriptions for those who people define themselves from, but using the cultural values of the working class; Jack defining himself against those who are not working against his high investment in a work ethic, cleanliness and tidiness of houses or children, work skills, attractiveness and sexuality, providing, knowing who you are and being part of the group. These cultural values have been maintained throughout the decline of industry, throughout the loss of jobs and some would say the loss of the working class. Of course, the working class has changed, but what is more important is the change in narrative about the working class.

Cultural exchange, anyone?

Narratives of lack are frequently accompanied by implicit or explicit narratives of decline, in which, the story goes, there was *once* a respectable working-class which held progressive principles and knew its assigned purpose. This class has now

⁴⁷ Home ownership on the estate differs from road to road, but averages out now that just over 40% of the houses are owned, but owned in the main by people from the estate.

disappeared, to be either absorbed into an allegedly-expanding middle class (embourgeoisement), or consigned to a workless and workshy underclass which lacks taste, dresses badly and is prey to a consumer culture (from which the middle classes are, presumably, immune). To quote Skeggs:

...such representations have nothing to do with working-class people themselves, but they can tell us something about the ways in which working-class people are othered and, hence, something about a normative and normalised middle-classness. (2004:329)

The normative and the normalised is obviously the key here. Having made the distinction - made the difference, created 'other' ideology - the 'other' has to be maintained and culture is the main key:

Any theory of culture must include the concept of the dialectical interaction between culture and something that is not culture. We must suppose the raw material of life experience, to be at one pole, and all the infinitely complex human disciplines and systems, articulate and inarticulate, formalized in institutions or dispersed in the least formal ways, which 'handle', transmit or distort this raw material to be the other. It is the active process – which is at the same time the process through which men [sic] make their history – which I am insisting on. (Thompson. 1978: 398)

Again here we see the maintenance of the divide, as Thompson states clearly the 'raw material of life experience' are actively processed, in the case of working classness the dialectical interaction between the 'raw life experience' and the active process that is calculated and made other, different to the dominant culture. As Skeggs (2004:153) states, 'Working-class culture is not point zero of culture; rather, it has a different value system, one not recognized by the dominant symbolic economy'.

In the pub the 'raw life experience' is processed and formalised in the institutions that maintain an active and successful culture; 'we know who we are' 'we look after our own' 'you are one of us' 'they're not like us' creates the divide as much as 'Do they have culture'? as Bottero discusses (2004). The difference being that the creation of the divide here creates a power divide recognised (particularly by women

in the pub) between 'us' and the dominant symbolic economy utilised by state services. State services as 'them', as 'they', being ideologically informed by the culture of difference, bring the 'classing gaze' - 'they' tell us that we are doing it wrong, getting it wrong, making wrong decisions. If they are not directly saying we have no culture, then it seems we have a hedonistic destructively wrong culture. The point here is not one of a lack of culture, but having a differing culture and a different value system. To quote Bourdieu: 'difference is asserted against what is closest, which represents the greatest threat' (Bourdieu 1984:479) A lack of recognition of the value systems and cultural value that differ from the 'dominant symbolic economy' has a detrimental impact on working class people's lives especially in the trend towards demonising the working class, dismissing the working class as such and focusing on a new group created as the underclass. Over the last few years there has been a plethora of programmes 'examining' the lives of those who live on benefits, Channel Four's '*Benefit Street*' and '*Skint*' perhaps being the best known examples of a type of programme that has been described as poverty porn. Whilst programmes such as these are supposed to be about people on benefits being able to present their stories of surviving on a low income but also the positives of living in a community that shares the same hardships. As such, this was an opportunity to show social and cultural exchange amongst some of the poorest amongst the working class in operation, a chance to observe the living out of those value systems and how these are tied to the realities and experiences of the people. Of course, historically the poor have long been associated with the material and the embodied (Bourdieu, 1986; Porter, 2003), 'the Cartesian mind/body split has not conferred the status of 'pure mind' on them. It is as if they are just *too material*.., this materiality has profound consequences in terms of a coding of the working class as repellent (Lawler 2005:428).

But as Bourdieu explains, social identity lies in difference, and difference is asserted against what is closest, which represents the greatest threat (Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction*, p. 479 in Lawler 2005 p.429) so the reality was that the old images of an underclass or the undeserving poor were remodelled and remain in the

media spotlight wearing track suit bottoms, drinking from a can and smoking cheap fags, reinforcing the image of the existence of a class who are base, lacking and uncultured. In creating the difference the threat has to be maintained, this is a continuing problem in terms of neo liberal ideologies, individualism and change as these are both undermined and underpinned by a problematic working class. They just don't seem to go away, no amount of education and community led initiatives, or recognising of 'local experts' (Bang, 2004) seems to make them stop being working class or, more importantly, not middle class - a constant reminder of difference the constant alterity.

Do they have culture?

But why is being working class something that you have to get away from, where does this idea that being working class is something that you have to escape? The idea of bettering yourself has a common ring within modern society resonant with Thatcher's new horizon of self -determined self -organising and supporting individuals and their families. There are questions here that need to be asked though. The stories of children from the 50's and 60's being promised a bike if they got into grammar, the stories of the children who passed the exams but couldn't go due to no finance to support them are multiple. Entrance to grammar schools certainly did provide opportunities for a select few, but often people were looking for better opportunities for their children than they had themselves, held the idea that education would offer their children a higher wage and greater stability, not necessarily that it would parachute them into the middle class culture. Those who stubbornly refused to embrace the neo-liberal route of education to self-determination, those who became increasingly disadvantaged and poor as result of these policies were re-branded under the new Labour government of the 1990's as the 'socially excluded', but this also progressively became a term used to ensure that the more extreme ends of poverty, and eventually those who were deemed the socially excluded became demonised. They became cut off from the hard working aspirational working class in their representation. They became the chav, the Wayne

and Waynetta, the Frank from *Shameless*, the Vickie Pollard, that are so supposed to optimise the lumpen proletariat. For this group there is no evidence of taste, of culture, they are base, scrounging lazy scum who deserve to be derided. Figures of fun that all at once we can be appalled at, horrified by, recognise and mainly define ourselves against, certain that the Franks and all the other characters represented in *Shameless* have excluded **themselves** from society. It is their choice not to take opportunities, their choice to exploit a benefits system that is supposed to help those 'in need not in greed'. This group lack the skills and aspiration to be anything other than chavs with no recognition of the skills needed to negotiate the benefits system or financially survive on benefits.

To return to the exchange where I was asked about my research and replied I was writing about working class culture, and the question of 'Do they have culture?' Now this may be a simple presumption that working class culture is an under use or engagement with middle class/ dominant culture, or simply that the person had never thought about the possibility of a separate working class identity and culture, but from the mocking tone in the question the conclusion can only be implicit in being working class is precisely a lack of culture.

Here lies the nub, people in the pub, of course, want their children to do well, and experience doesn't show that education is the only means of achieving 'doing well'. Job, kids, nice house and being happy may also be indicators for that. Engaging with state agencies such as education, health or social services can be negative and experience shows that there are other ways of doing things than what they say. Achieving and owning are linked not to vulgarity; materiality is a cultural indicator that is if not read at all often, is misread as vulgar. This materiality for the people in the pub, more so the women, is the main way that people show their success, that they can provide they can not only survive but 'do well' on a low income – you can dress your kids as fashionably as the others are, have the right phone, the right telly, have the jewellery, etc. Again, this is where the code of wealth display and success within the class is misread as vulgar, showy, lacking 'class'. As discussed when

looking at construction of gender difference in working class identity, descriptions of working class women and men are descriptive of 'excess', too much make up too much hair, too masculine, too inclined towards consumption, or we consume too much - even our tellies are too big. The working classes are seen as base, the working classes are still bounded in the base irrational immediacy of consumption, no deferring of gratification and lacking in 'culture' and through this the 'classing gaze' continues.

The vilification of the white working class has a place in the reading of class, especially in the making of 'other' and where this is seen to be more operational is the writing of white working class women. The classing gaze falls more keenly on women, partly as women have more contact with state agencies as discussed. But to return to symbolic violence, the distinction of class then enhanced with a further distinction of gender is a double bind for white working class women, but is maintained in the academic literature especially in the construction of a working class history where women seem to disappear.

'One size fits all'. Gender/class identity

Having discussed the lives of women in the pub the question is still what does it mean to be a working class woman, are working class women the same as working class men but in working class women's jobs or are working class women a more deprived/excluded versions of their middle class sisters? I argue no, class and gender are experienced, part of the divide, they are not just structural impositions that give rise to consciousness, as Davidoff and Hall state: Consciousness of class always takes a gendered form. (Davidoff and Hall 1987:339) Working class women are not just female versions of working class men, our experiences differ, we are not just more deprived/excluded versions of middle class women again our experiences differ.

Hey positions gender and class as experience- as discussed by herself and Reay (2003) as women academics from working class backgrounds-emphasising that

locating working-classness in institutional forms of class misses or denies the access to the lived experience of class that are 'marked on *our* souls', and continues:

Could it be that there is a serious (partial) misreading based on an original false premise? Isn't the *post*-traditional position predicated on the restricted tradition of living as well as imagining and conceptualising class almost entirely as a structural economic- form one that makes commentators simply oblivious to the intimate forms of social classed life? (Hey 2003. 322)

I take this point further and argue that as Hey and the contributors to *Class Matters* discuss that 'in order to be heard they learned to talk like the audience' but it is not just that the audience recognise their own voices so to speak in terms of theory, the theories of class have structured a restricted and monolithic voice for working classness that leaves our experiences mute, this is intensified when gender is added. As mentioned in chapter one a cursory reading of

will tend to focus on what has become the acceptable face of working class, predominantly focuses on mining, miners, and mining communities, a profession that as a result of the Mines and Collieries act of 1842 is predominantly male leaving the women practically invisible. A case in point being representations of women's involvement in the miner's strikes of the 1980's where women activists were usually presented as miner's wives:

as a singular moment of working class female activism. Media representations from the period, including photographs, newspaper reports and the women's own publications show them in collective kitchens, at community and cultural events, at rallies and on picket lines. It is possible to deduce from these characterisations of women in the strike a simple narrative of linear progression from individual/family concerns, to collective action, to political engagement (Coltour et al: 1984)

Or even more telling of the theoretical standpoint of the reading of class and gender in researching the miner's strike, 'The idea of the strike as a journey towards political consciousness which at one and the same time both reaffirmed and transformed class and gender identities'. (Spence and Stephenson 2007: p.1) But

Spence and Stephenson's study showed that the majority of the women activists in the strike were not in fact wives of miners; I certainly was not, nor are any members of my family ever been involved in mining, my involvement was based on my class identity, other were involved asserting a fracturing within the moral economy, the government declaring 'class war' on the miners. In some ways we might say it is irrelevant if the women activists were or were not wives, daughters, granddaughters of miners, but the point to recognise here that in order to bring the political activism into the narrative of the miner's strike the women 'become' wives. The lack of a gendered narrative for political action or working class identity for working class women is indicative of the representation of women in white working class life and culture, we become wives.

What does this say of gender identity within white working class life in the pub where gender and class are played out on a daily basis. It would not seem to make sense that those who occupy the same disadvantage would then ascribe a further segregation that increases the disadvantage for that new separated group, but that is how gender can be read and operates, but is there resistance to these ascribed differences or even a 'marginal life' for working class women? I have argued how appropriate gender identity is strongly maintained and reinforced in the pub, though this is often contradictory and does not make sense in the sense that why would people adhere to strict binary gender identities that promote and have negative impacts on their lives? It would be simple to answer that gender is as strictly reinforced as it is part of class.

Where the men are men: and so are the women.

The structural nature of both class and gender - as I have argued - impacts on the lives of working class women in that we are invisible in the primary indicator of what it is to be working class - work. The continuation of the epistemology of working classness continues to be male with women occupying the margins. I have argued that the lack of a narrative of white working class women, the dominance of certain

forms of work – for instance mining - is informed by a prerogative of men as workers but also serves to continue the division by privileging certain forms of work as defining working class identity. The image of dirty hands and credibility as a worker that is so much part of the identity of the men in the pub is also seen in Pat's description of the need to be tough in order to be able to 'look after others'; the idea of fight, tough and work collapse into the image of the working class male provider and reflect the sheer brutal reality of past-and present-working lives. To return to the 1842 Mining and Collieries Act which removed women and children under the age of 10 from working below ground is rightly seen as progressive in protecting workers of the time. But try thinking of this also as removing the ability of women and older children to be economically active members of a household, making them dependent on working men. Combine this dependence with nothing being changed in terms of the working conditions that the men were expected to continue working in and what can be seen is the ancestor of today's working class gender stereotypes, present in the ancestors of today's working class people. Creating difference in work-as well as pay and opportunities - for men and women continues in the lives of women and men in the pub not just in the structural sense but in the ideologies of those divisions, the brutal strength of the man and the weaker nurturing woman. The brutal and violent working conditions that were part of the industrial revolution are a result of ideologies of difference mirrored by the symbolic violence of difference that not only made the group 'working class' but then divided the group further in terms of gender appropriateness and continue to impact on working class women and men's lives today. In acknowledging the role of ideologies of difference the role of pragmatic acceptance - we do it because it works - offers a very credible answer to the question of division in terms of class and within white working class culture. But the consequences of gender division are often brutal which begs to ask - why do we allow these divisions to continue? How do you change divisions in a society that continues to maintain the basic economic structures of inequality that form working class lives? This question also needs to be divided into two parts in light of the lives in the pub. First as society has moved further in neo-liberal

ideologies of civic society - and promotion of the individual - not only serves to create a blame culture but further fractures the moral economy of mutual concedence between classes in post-industrial societies. In demanding the re-invention of self - self as project that is central to neo-liberalism - the basic tenet of reciprocation between the classes is lost as the value of being a worker as cleaner or block paver is no longer recognised as important within society; a strata of work and workers, though vital to society, has become devalued in the aspirational project of project-self society and Shared society. The rules have changed in that project self as part of Shared Society is not just about not being able to rely on the state to shore up areas of life such as housing or health, people are now expected to make those areas that used to be supplied such as parks, clean streets libraries etc. part of project self and do it yourself, as Theresa May stated at launch of Shared Society:

The shared society is one that doesn't just value our individual rights but focuses rather more on the responsibilities we have to one another. It's a society that respects the bonds that we share as a union of people and nations... The bonds of family, community, citizenship, strong institutions. And it's a society that recognises the obligations we have as citizens - obligations that make our society work. (The Independent. Sunday 8 January 2017)

It may initially appear that Shared Society is a call to the concedence of former societies in respect of recognition of inequality but reciprocity of some form, a recognition that social inequality needs to be addressed, but this move acknowledges inequality in the aspect of too much attention and welfare benefit being paid to poverty and not enough to the 'just getting by' the call to obligation as citizens is the call to align to an aspirational society of civic responsibility that demands that those in poverty aspire to endeavor on whatever course is required to remove themselves from their social position. A society that continues in social inequality and blaming those who are defined as 'problematic' as responsible for their own problems. For the people in the pub, as argued throughout the study, this continuing division results in the structural divisions that impact on our lives, the

ideologies that inform policy and attitude towards our lives continue to not only blame us for our situation, they vilify the way in which we live our lives, our doxa that means we survive these divisions.

The second point is that the false divisions of class and gender are fostered in a pragmatic acceptance of separation. The imposed separation of working lives informed by ideologies of difference; separation of public lives, and often domestic lives too, again informed by ideologies of difference, perversely enabled differing forms of social, cultural and especially emotional capital to develop. As was discussed the power base for women being the home and the children, is a power and the skill that women use in order to make sure they keep a house, keep a home is clear throughout. The statement of 'I've got my 'ouse and me kids the rest is just bollocks' is testament to the amount of power women invest and gain from the domestic. Place this alongside the instances of the men's desire and need to be part of the domestic world, 'I just want someone to wake up with' and it becomes apparent that although generally undervalued, the domestic realm has 'real' power for women.

Education, habitus and emotional capital

The separation of women's lives also follows the flow of social and emotional capital as response to their exposure to the classing gaze of the state, especially in raising children. In preparing children for becoming adults it would seem only reasonable that women equip them with the skills and resources that are shown to be effective. The counter argument to this could be that women are perpetuating a culture that is the cause of problems for their children, that they should encourage their children to apply themselves in school, to adhere to school norms and values to achieve the education to 'get on', that problems that children encounter in school are problems of the parent especially the mother. Reay discusses how mother's interventions and

support in the best interests of their children continues inequality in education for working class children:

‘Acting in their child’s best interests’ inevitably means middle-class mothers acting simultaneously against the interests of the children of other, less privileged, mothers. (Reay, 1998a: 165)

But for the women and children in this study, women’s interventions in school are not to do with scrabbling for resources, inequality of education here is not to do with being in the right class or clique, it is to do with our children not fulfilling the cultural demands of an education system that is not designed for our children. This is class consciousness but not a consciousness that can be acted upon, as Bottero states: ‘It is hard to storm the barricades over social cliques, snobbery, or the pushiness of middle-class mothers’. (2004:995) there are no middle-class mothers in our schools, I would say it is even harder to storm the barricades over neo-liberal education policies enacted out in schools which define children as lacking especially when you experienced the same attitudes in your education.

As said, parents do ascribe to a greater or lesser degree of the importance of education for their children, it is the cultural aspects of school they often clash with, and far too often their children are let down by the education system they are asked to ‘buy into’. To return to two main points of exclusion and lack of educational achievement featured in the study, experience forms the way people act and react to these situations, the dialogical self here draws not only on narratives of self but of historical and contemporary others. The conversation between Lorraine, Sheila and Karen about the exclusion of their sons from school during inspection time, and Katie and Amy not being entered for SAT’s as they would ‘fail’ show how despite schools often being places of rejection and problems for their children the women still engage with schools to enable their children to finish their education. Drawing on emotional capital and social capital from other women in the group women endeavour to

negotiate their children's lives through school. To return to the example of Ben (p.164). The school understandably sees Ben as a difficult child - a problem - a low achiever with no interest in school but a considerable interest in violence. The fourth child from a family who have all showed pretty much the same attitude of indifference and violence, so the offer of a medical explanation for Ben's presentation of problems from a problem family - he may have ADHD - can be seen as the school attempting to solve a long term problem with a credible solution. Or it can be seen as the school pathologising Ben and his behaviour, a psycho-medical solution to a problem rather than attempting to see Ben's behaviour as a response to his sense of injustice, older kids are hitting his friends and no adult is doing anything to stop it so he does. The symbolic violence that frames the lives and experiences of Ben, Katie, Amy and the other children in the study is ignored in focusing on poor behaviour and poor educational achievement. It would seem that we have not progressed very far since Willis' 'Learning to Labour: why working class kids get working class jobs' (1977) except the division and derision for this generation of children has worsened.

Ben, Katie, Amy and their contemporaries will survive school and go on to get working class jobs, some of them skilled jobs. The culture that was learned from their family, from the pub, from the estate will enable them work, to not only survive but to thrive within that culture; it is outside that culture that they face problems. The social and cultural capital, the networks available to them through that capital is invaluable - it works that's why we do it - but it does perpetuate a divided and often violent way of living.

Class and Gender

Gender is a further division within being working class that appears - and is - archaic, such separated lives for men and women would seem to have no part of a modern society of gender equality. But again these divisions - structural and cultural - have

not disappeared in the lives of the women and men in the pub, we continue in this way of doing things because it is what has developed in the structural divisions of the past and it still works because fundamentally there are still those divisions. Our boys are introduced to gender equality through school, they know strong women so this has resonance for them, but there are indicators in how to apply these ideas beyond the ways our lives continue to be structured. Our girls are taught in school about equality, that they can be anything that they want to be, but then find that they cannot be whatever they want to be due to mainly structural barriers of education and economics. They may be told that they can be engineers and scientists in year 8 but by year 11 they are being steered towards child care and health and beauty courses.

To return to the endless conversations between the women and their children, women and the young women and amongst ourselves the constant has always been preparing and advising, skilling in order to navigate gendered lives in the pub. The women are there with a wealth of knowledge of surviving economically, physically and emotionally, knowledge that has developed as they bear the brunt of relying on the welfare system and so have become skilled in how negotiate the system and pass that knowledge on. As I have said women are in the margins of white working class culture, but this is not the reality, the reality is white working class culture is in the margins of what is seen to be working class life and as women we are relegated to the margins through ideology and in some instances – some forms of work - and policy women's lives and the culture that we reproduce continues in the margins. The lens of enquiry about white working class life has tended to focus on work and ignored by and large women's involvement traditional ideas of work such as manufacturing. In the margins women have continued to work, raise their kids and keep their homes, reproduce the culture needed for the next generation, reproduce the cultural resilience, networks and capital required to be successful white working class women even though they may appear too much they continue to do it because it works - and what else should they do?

In reflecting on 'where next' for a study such as this I am left with the conclusion that, even though I have tried not to romanticise the lives of people in the pub, unless there is positive recognition of what people do, such as making decisions based on economic, structural and ideological inequality (such as healthy eating vs. sausage and chips), many more research projects will launch to impact on the lives of people living in areas indicating poverty and will replicate the same problems –they are doing it wrong- no recognition of the value of the culture of the people in that area-we do it this way because it works. The way forward perhaps is to address some of the fundamental issues rooted in the ideologies, to examine the epistemologies that inform so much of our research and question the 'acting upon' approach. Rather than employing a microscope to examine peoples' lives and then desiring a change in what the white working class do, it is time to and look for ways to change the lens, or better, to turn the lens round and look at the reasons for producing research that continues to reproduce ideologies of lack of culture rather than addressing inequalities in the experiences of working class people's lives? The statements of 'we do it cos it works' and 'they think we're stupid don't they' are damning of much of the research concerning white working class people's lives, and indicative of ideologies of cultural superiority and lack, it is time to address how and why we continue to research white working class people's lives in piece meal approaches whilst refusing to acknowledge how life style choices or what -ever are informed, it's time to re-think 'What does class mean'.

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